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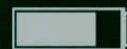
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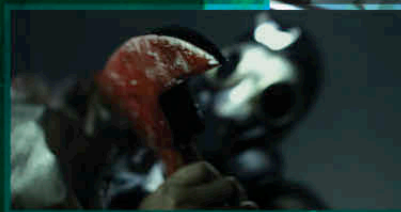
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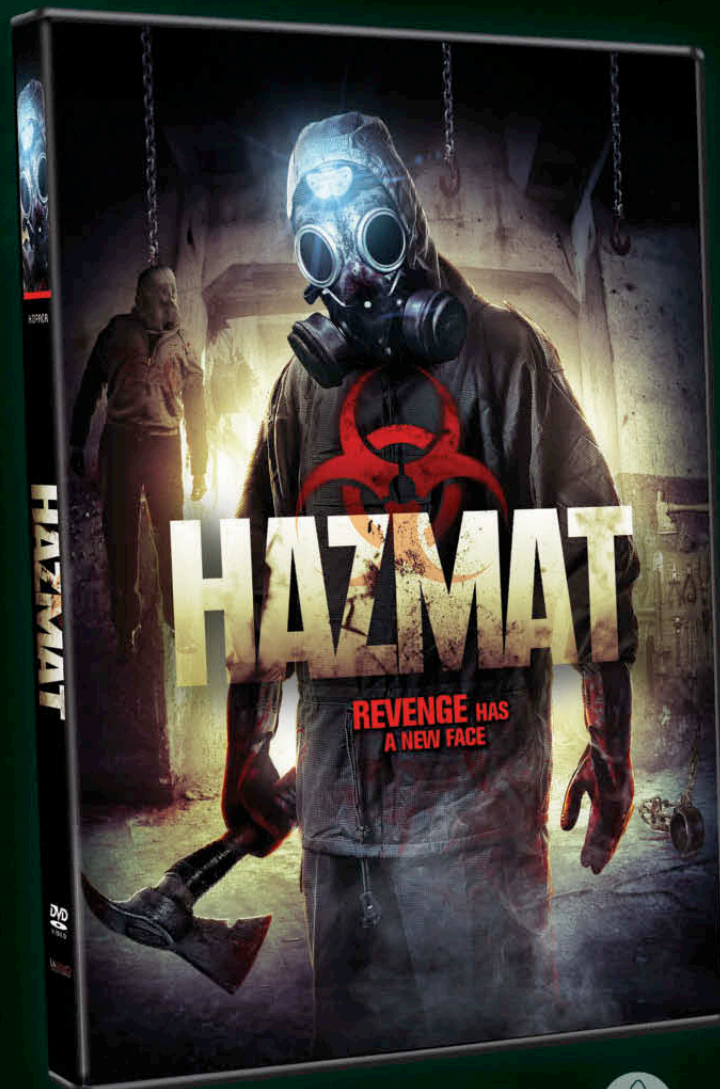
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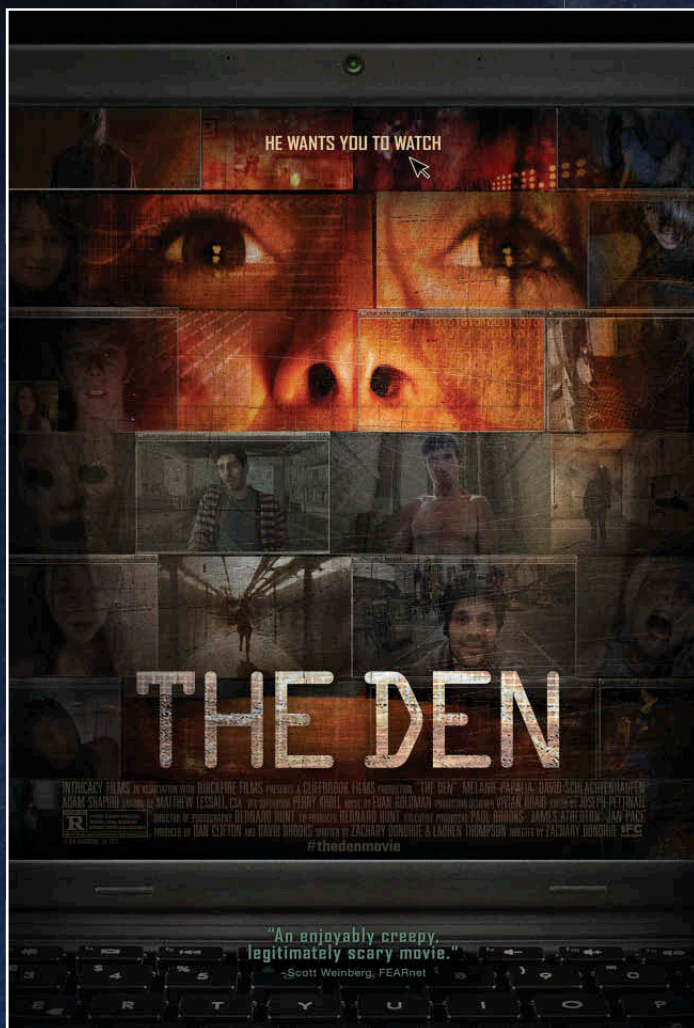
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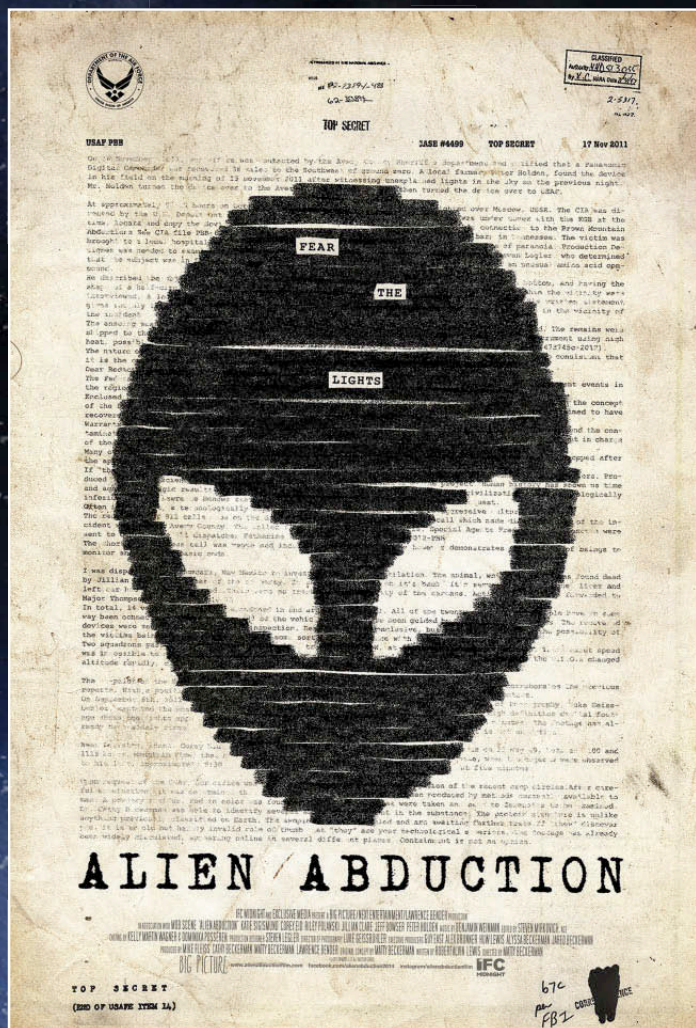
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16 THE PINES AND LAURA PALMER

To celebrate 25 years of the ultimate cult TV show, we pull up a piece of pie with cast and crew from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*. **PLUS:** Laura Palmer herself, Sheryl Lee, on the death, life and afterlife of the murdered prom queen who changed television, and Ray Wise reflects on playing demonically possessed loving father Leland Palmer.

by **ANDY BURNS**

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The ultra gory zombies-in-'Nam comic '68 soldiers on with fresh hells in its rotten universe.

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by **APRIL SNELLINGS**

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In Mike Flanagan's evil mirror movie

Oculus, nothing is as it seems.

by **SEAN PLUMMER**

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Skull-lover Justin Kameron captures the beauty in decay with his deathly elaborate illustrations.

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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND



Last night a woman, bathed in a bright light, appeared in the corner of my bedroom and told me that one of the radiators in there was named Jason, and that it was evil. This means two things: A) I just conjured up the worst idea ever for a horror movie, and B) I may have overdosed on *Twin Peaks* leading up to our cover story on David Lynch's TV masterpiece. Re-watching the series has made things for me downright Lynchian as of late (considerably better than saying I got "Lynched," I suppose...), which, as anyone with a passing knowledge of his work knows, is a synonym for weird. So then, exactly what type of weird is "Lynchian?"

It's a particular brand of surrealism bubbling beneath 1950s Americana. If I were to describe the filmmaker's work as a painting, it would be a sunny Norman Rockwell piece that's cracked and flaking to reveal the dark hell of a Hieronymus Bosch canvas beneath. That most definitely describes *Twin Peaks*, which contains all of Lynch's themes, motifs, obsessions and idiosyncrasies.

That surrealist influence can be traced back to French poet André Breton, who created the movement in 1924 with his Manifesto of Surrealism. Inspired by Sigmund Freud's theories about the unconscious, he stated that the goal of surrealism was "to resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a super-reality." Basically, he was saying that in between our ordered everyday reality, and the chaos of our unconscious mind (the kind of crazy things you dream up, like, um, evil radiators named Jason), is the surreal, tying those two worlds together. Lynch's work is full of bizarre imagery, themes of two worlds co-existing, and much duality (even the show's title represents a doubling). Almost every character in *Twin Peaks* has a hidden dark side and/or a twin. Popular blonde prom queen Laura Palmer secretly lived a hell of physical, sexual and mental abuse, while her look-alike cousin (both characters played by Sheryl Lee) was the well-rounded bookish brunette good girl. Laura's dad, Leland, was both a loving father and the embodiment of the evil spirit BOB; the Black Lodge was answered by a White Lodge; there are the two pieces of Laura's heart locket and the two very different boys she was involved with (good boy James Hurley and bad boy Bobby Briggs).

The town of Twin Peaks itself has that innocent veneer of 1950s America – diners, Mayberry-style lawmen and enough quaint scenery to launch a 1000 postcards – but a hellish underbelly of serial murder, supernatural evil and enough criminal activity to launch 1000 investigations. Like the town of Lumberton in *Blue Velvet*, Lynch's project prior to *Twin Peaks* and very much it's thematic precursor, this is a place where two worlds collide with strange, sometimes beautiful, but usually horrifying, results. Watching the show for a second time – years after I would rush over to a friend's place while on high school lunch break to view taped episodes with an exhilaration caused by dread and anticipation – it feels more than ever like a place out of time and space... like something in a dream.

Twin Peaks has that hold on me because it's so affecting in the way it incorporates the world of the unconscious into the everyday, to connect on a deeper level. Consider some of the dreamlike elements that are key to the show. There's the appearance of strangers who seem to know you and say often random stuff. The Man from Another Place (the midget) and The Giant (another twining, by the way) show up to impart seemingly nonsensical pieces of information to Agent Cooper. There's also the illogical, inconsistent lighting and sounds, and use of slow-motion, to create that literal nightmare feeling. Plus, we see alternate versions of the familiar, such as Agent Cooper and Laura appearing in The Red Room 25 years older. As well, there's an attention to artifice in the form of the soap opera that some of the characters watch, which is similar to the show itself; to me, this recalls that feeling of dreaming something and knowing you're dreaming. And, of course, spatial disambiguation – many of us dream of places that feel familiar yet don't logically fit together, like when your grandmother's living room is somehow in a shopping mall. My favourite example of this is One-Eyed Jack's, the brothel casino just on the other side of the Canadian border, which geographically should be in British Columbia, but given the strong French Canadian accents of the Renault brothers tied up in it, we (at least us Canucks) assume it's in Quebec, which is way further east on the North American map. (Pssst... note that the Jack on the playing card is another twin.)

Twin Peaks is Lynch's hideaway for the irrational creatures of the subconscious, a super-reality that's also the biggest, most popular piece of surreal art ever created. Getting it on network television was a truly revolutionary act, and I love how the series pokes a finger right into our grey matter like it was, say, cherry pie filling. I'm proud to be a *Peaks* Freak.

After all, the radiators are not what they seem.

Dave Alex

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Horror in Culture & Entertainment

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RUE MORGUE #143 is dedicated to Harold Ramis, R.I.P.

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



GREAT EDITORIAL in *RM#142* on how *I, Frankenstein* misses the essential core of the character

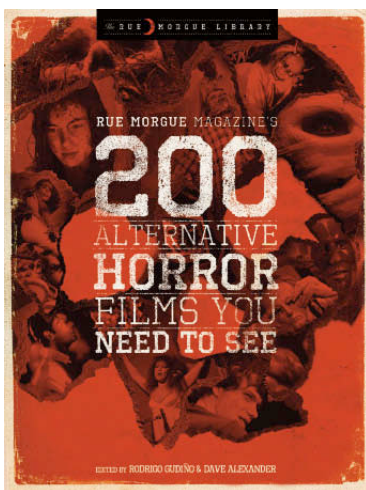
@DAVID_ANNANDALE, VIA TWITTER

IN *RM#140*, director of *The Exorcist*, William Friedkin, revealed in his interview that he believed that the Germans during the Nazi era were literally possessed by demons. I found this to be astonishing. This kind of ignorance should have been challenged. I wonder if Friedkin would consider demonic possession to be the cause of the genocide of Native Americans? Something tells me that has never crossed his mind. In fact, there is some evidence to show that Hitler based his extermination campaign against the Jews on the US government's program for the eradication of Native Americans. Mr. Friedkin also subtly tries to link the Nazis' fake and twisted version of national socialism with the real international socialism of the Soviet Union who suffered the most under Hitler's aggression, losing at least 20 million of its citizens and over a third of its industry and infrastructure. You can thank Stalin and the Red Army for destroying over 80 percent of the Nazi war machine – no help from gods or devils required.

JOSEPH WATERS – NORTH CAROLINA

I CAME ACROSS the *200 Alternative Horror Films* supplement on the Hemlock Books website. I read the review of the book and I liked the look of it, so I ordered it. Can I say I loved it? The concise reviews, all-colour format and layout were excellent. This could be the start of a great series of books. Great idea. On the spine it says "01 The Rue Morgue Library." Have you published any other books or are there plans to do so?

DAVID – UNITED KINGDOM



[We are indeed hard at work on the next volume of the *Rue Morgue Library*. Watch for it later this year, and thanks for your support! - Ed.]

SUBSCRIBED TO A BUNCH of horror magazines because I couldn't as a kid. So far @RueMorgue wins.

@ANDREWLINCOLN, VIA TWITTER

I LOVE RUE MORGUE but alas my finances won't allow me to renew my subscription. Where can I buy your wonderful magazine?

KELLY GREDNER, VIA FACEBOOK

[*Rue Morgue* is available at most of the major bookstore chains in the US and Canada, as well as many comic book shops. Individual issues can also be purchased in both physical and digital formats in our online store at rue-morgue.com. - Ed.]

HEY GHOULS, thank you so much for offering a digital version of your great magazine. As much as I miss holding this fabulous glossy piece of art in my hands, nothing beats buying the magazine the same day it comes out. I get frustrated knowing a new issue is available but my local bookstore hasn't received it yet or my subscription has yet to arrive here in the States. All I have to do now is press "purchase" and I have the best fucking magazine at my fingertips! Thanks again... Now hurry up with the next issue!

DAVID GLEN RICE – ADDRESS WITHHELD

MY STUNNING LIBRARIAN girlfriend renewed my *Rue Morgue* subscription she gave me for my birthday last year. And she can't stand horror, what a doll! I think I have one more issue to arrive from the original subscription. It is the gift that keeps giving. She also cut/transferred/pressed a T-shirt stencil of a 1986 *Thrasher* magazine cover with Danzig on it, between the last Samhain LP and before the debut Danzig LP. What a gal. Thanks for a monthly surprise and keep the print version of *RM* alive.

RICHARD – ADDRESS WITHHELD

WE LOVE YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE and enjoy sharing the awesome stuff you post just about everyday! Thanks for the awesome stuff!

INFECT SCRANTON, VIA FACEBOOK

EXPIRING MINDS...

ON RUE MORGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE



Ever have a **DATE** go bad because you're a horror fan?

Watching *Hellraiser*. The lady excused herself to get something out of the car. Never saw her again. More beer and pizza for me I guess...

JEREMY OLSON

I'm a huge Rob Zombie fan; this douche saw my Captain Spaulding tattoo and felt that he needed to tell me loudly about what a horrible character he was and what a terrible movie it was. I smiled and nodded and told him to fuck off.

ROSE BEACH-MENDOZA

We had been introduced by a mutual friend who wanted to set us up. We were all at my place and decided to watch a movie. She started looking through my DVDs and asked, "What are you, a psycho?" There was really nothing else to say after that.

DAVE MCCANN

Just once. He said "horror films are fucking stupid." I dumped him.

SONYA GRAY

Yes! She said she would pray for me and then put her head between her legs to vomit as we watched *Gates of Hell*!

JU GOMEZ

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Dreadlines



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

HORROR ANTHOLOGY TO EXPLORE MEXICAN FOLKLORE

A new project is putting an intriguing cultural spin on the familiar horror anthology model. *México Bárbaro*, currently in production, will bring together eight Mexican filmmakers to offer modern interpretations of some of the country's traditional legends and folklore.

The project was conceived by Lex Ortega, a sound-designer-turned-director whose technical credits include Richard Raaphorst's *Frankenstein's Army*, plus Adrián García Bogliano's *Here Comes the Devil* and the upcoming *Late Phases*. Ortega wanted to provide a platform for short films, which are otherwise limited to the genre festival circuit.

"Short films are some of the most powerful weapons we have as independent filmmakers, but unfortunately it's almost impossible to get your work shown regularly at movie theatres," Ortega says. "They're always welcome at film festivals and special showings, but their life is very brief and they don't break through as much as a feature film can. That's basically how the idea of *México Bárbaro* came about. When it's part of an anthology, a short film has the chance for wider exposure and greater audience impact."

To flesh out the anthology's creative lineup, Ortega turned to filmmakers he'd met at genre festivals where his own shorts were being screened. Besides his own work, the roster includes *We Are What We Are* director Jorge Michel Grau, along with Edgar Nito, Gigi Saúl Guerrero, Isaac Ezbán, Laurette Flores, Ulises Guzmán and Rue Morgue Mexico coordinator Aarón Soto. Ortega cites the diversity of the lineup as one of the project's most notable assets.

"An anthology is not new at all," he admits. "There have been all kinds of movies like that all over the world, and even in Mexico there are a few underground genre anthologies. What I think makes us special is the independent way we're doing it, our territorial context and the fact that



México Bárbaro is the brainchild of director Lex Ortega (right).

both male and female directors, some already established and some who are just beginning their careers, are working together."

While the directors are sharing ideas and resources, Ortega says it's up to each filmmaker to finance his or her own segment.

"That's a very important part of this project," explains the Mexico City native. "We're not waiting for a huge company to sponsor us, and we're not going through endless paperwork to get government incentives."

The theme of Mexican folklore is the backbone of the anthology, but don't expect traditional interpretations. Ezbán's segment, "La cosa mas preciada" ("The Most Precious Thing"), finds a group of trolls out to steal a young girl's virginity; and in Guerrero's "Día de los Muertos" ("Day of the Dead"), male strip-club patrons get their comeuppance at the hands of the women they've abused.

"Mexico is rich in culture, traditions and endless legends," Ortega points out. "Some of them go all the way to Central and South America, and every country adapts them to their cultural roots and

makes them their own. We are not recreating Mexican traditions and legends in the literal context. That is for historians. We're making horror. We want to show the world stories that have haunted us since childhood."

Besides the general theme and a few technical requirements, Ortega issued an "anything goes" directive to his fellow *México Bárbaro* filmmakers, promising that their segments will not be censored. Judging from a few of the narrative elements teased so far – Soto's "Drena" ("Drain") concerns a teenage girl who is tasked with extracting blood from her mother's vagina in order to feed a mysterious new "friend" – the directors are taking advantage of that creative freedom.

If all goes as planned, *México Bárbaro* will be finished in time for this year's Fantasia Film Festival in Montreal. Ortega is also developing a second horror anthology called *Alerta! Recuento de Cadáveres* (*Beware! Body Count*), with a roster that includes *Penumbra* co-director Ramiro García Bogliano and Chilean exploitation auteur Jorge Mella (*Hidden in the Woods*).

APRIL SNELLINGS



INTERACTIVE GAME PROVIDES SAW-LIKE TRAP SCENARIOS

For anyone who has ever watched a horror film and thought, "That's not what I would do in that situation," comes *Exit*, a new gaming experience for genre fans that provides the opportunity to put your brain – and guts – to the test. The interactive real-life game, which has opened in Richmond, British Columbia, locks players in a room to test their logic, endurance and, quite possibly, sanity.

Room escape games originated in Japan in 2008, starting as an online pastime that evolved into real-life simulations. *Exit* creator Justin Tang first tried one of the simulations in Beijing, then decided to take the concept global. In *Exit*, two to six players are locked a themed room and given 45 minutes to get free; there are puzzles and clues to aid participants, who are allowed two hints per game. (All the rooms are also equipped with an intercom for emergencies.)

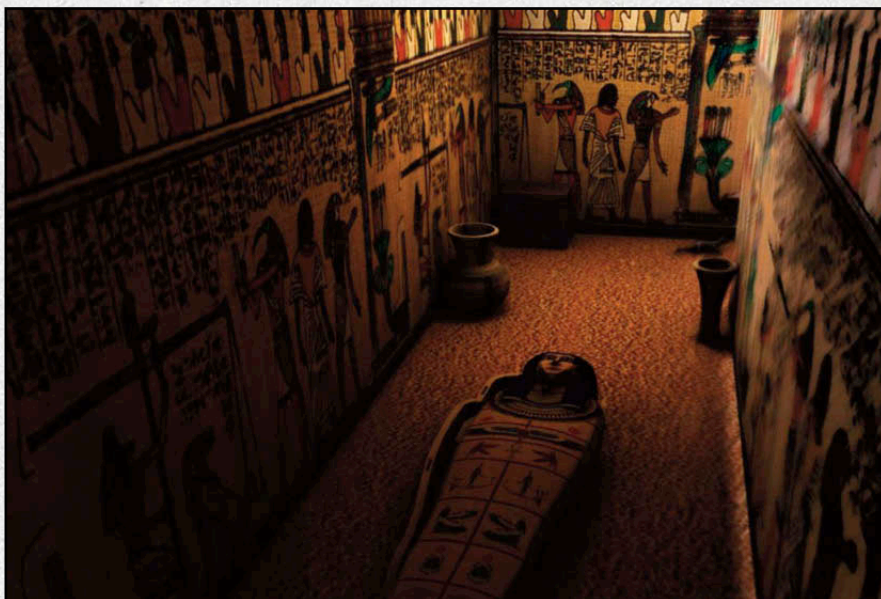
"Before I experienced it I thought, 'There is no way I am going to pay people to lock me up,'" recalls Tang. "After playing it, however, I knew I must bring this to the North American market! I can't describe it. It's like love: you have to experience it."

In Tang's creation, there are four different styles of rooms to choose from: The Lost Ship, Ancient Egypt, Prison Escape and Laboratory Escape. Those who complete the challenge are photographed with an "escaped" sign and added to the Wall of Fame, whereas unsuccessful candidates are photographed with a "fail" sign and added to the Tree of Shame.

What sets *Exit* apart from other room escape games is the level of difficulty and the style of gameplay Tang has created for North American players. Each game gets progressively harder, but that doesn't mean they start off easy. Tang jokes that they range from "hard to harderrrrr!" and with the success rate at only one percent despite thousands of attempts since it opened in October 2013, it seems Tang really wants to test his customers.

"We have had groups that made it out from the hardest one in just one try – it isn't impossible," he notes. "It sounds challenging, but what fun is it if it was too easy?"

The hardest room, Laboratory Escape, is also the most horror influenced. The laboratory is covered with blood spatter, has surgical equipment lying around, and in a premise that echoes the movie *Saw*, it challenges players to avoid



Get Out!: The Prison Escape and Ancient Egypt rooms offered as part of the *Exit* game experience.

horrific faux deaths.

Although *Exit* will ultimately attract a lot of horror fans, Tang believes it works on a much broader level.

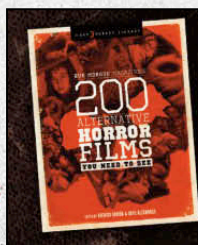
"I watch horror movies, but I wouldn't say I am a huge fan," he admits. "The 'horror' theme is just to provide our customers with an impact and bring them into the mood of the game. Our game is a test of intelligence, not just simply a horror game."

After only being open a few months, he has already had franchising inquiries, from cities such as Toronto and San Francisco.

There is no age limit to play *Exit*, but it is recommended that only people aged sixteen and above try it. Tickets start at \$45.98 for two players.

For more information or to book your own escape, visit e-exit.ca.

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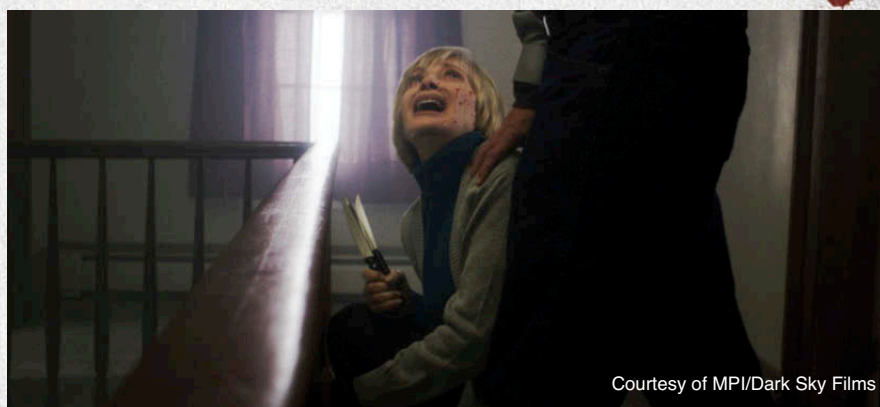
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BARBARA CRAMPTON, LISA MARIE AND LARRY FESSENDEN IN NEW HAUNTED HOUSE FILM

Take a haunted house story, throw in the influences of H.P. Lovecraft and Lucio Fulci, add some popular genre actors, and you've got a movie that'll get the attention of horror fans. The project in question is *We Are Still Here*, the first feature by writer/producer Ted Geoghegan, whose credits include co-scripting Andreas Schnaas' *Demonium* and Timo Rose's *Barriade*.

"I tend to lean more towards slasher films and things that are a bit lighter," explains Geoghegan. "This is definitely not a light film, although there are moments of wonderful levity amidst all the darkness and gore that eventually shows up. My hope is that we have a stellar concept that turns into a stellar movie, like *House*."

We Are Still Here stars scream queen Barbara Crampton (*Re-Animator*, *You're Next*) and Andrew Sensenig (*Upstream Color*, *The Last Exorcism Part II*) as a couple grieving the death of their child. They move to the New England town of Islesberry after getting an unusually good deal on a house. Once there, they believe that their dead child is haunting them and enlist their New Age-y friends May (Lisa Marie: *Sleepy Hollow*, *Mars Attacks!*) and Jacob (Larry Fes-



Courtesy of MPI/Dark Sky Films

senden: *I Sell The Dead*, *You're Next*) for assistance. Together they uncover a century-old secret that the locals are willing to die to protect.

"I wanted to create something that would showcase their unique talents," says Geoghegan of casting Crampton and Fessenden. "I also felt like both of them deserved really meaty roles that they could really sink their teeth into."

Karim Hussain (*Hobo with a Shotgun*, *Antiviral*) serves as director of photography, special effects are being handled by Oddtopsy's Marcus Koch (*The Theatre Bizarre*, *Live Evil*) and MPI Media is behind the project, which is expected

to begin its festival run later this year. Geoghegan hopes their combined efforts will result in a film with the arcane atmosphere of Lovecraft and the visceral bite of Fulci.

"There's something both gorgeous and terrifying about New England," he says. "There's something about the calm that becomes almost nightmarish after a while, and I think that influenced Lovecraft when he wrote out here. ... After a while, you can't help but wonder if there's something dark going on under the surface, which this film plays very heavily into."

MICHELE GALGANA

ENTRAILS

Writer/director/actor Harold Ramis, died February 24, aged 69, after fighting autoimmune inflammatory vasculitis since 2010. Ramis was best known for playing Egon Spengler in the 1984 hit *Ghostbusters*. He also wrote and directed *Groundhog Day* and *Caddyshack*, both of which featured Bill Murray, who paid tribute to the late filmmaker at this year's Oscars while announcing the nominations for Best Cinematography.



Rob Zombie and Bret Easton Ellis are reportedly teaming up for a new TV series that will follow the murder-

ous exploits of the Manson Family. *Variety* reported in late February that Fox is currently debating greenlighting the production, which would see Ellis writing and Zombie directing. The news comes after Zombie announced his next planned project *Broad Street Bullies*, an ice hockey movie, had been shelved.

R.L. Stine's bestselling novel, *Eye Candy*, has been picked up for a ten-episode series by MTV. The show will follow a New York girl who believes one of her online dates is a serial killer. Nickelodeon star Victoria Justice has been cast as Lindy Sampson, the series' lead. The drama is set to be produced by *Twilight*'s Catherine Hardwicke and *Paranormal Activity*'s Jason Blum.

Tony DeRosa-Grund, producer of *The Conjuring*, has secured the rights to the story of a real-life exorcism by Rev. Michael Maginot of St. Stephen Martyr Parish in Indiana. Maginot claims to have performed exorcisms on Latoya Ammons and her three children. According to Ammons, the family experienced paranormal activity in their new rental home, which

led to full demonic possessions. Maginot has also signed a deal with the Travel Channel's *Ghost Adventures* to make a documentary in which he revisits the Ammons' former home.

Skinny Puppy has invoiced the US government for \$666,000 after hearing that its music was used as a form of torture at Guantanamo Bay, from a former guard penning a tell-all book. In an interview with CTV, band member cEvin Key said, "I am not only against the fact they're using our music to inflict damage on somebody else, but they are doing it without anybody's permission."

Bryan Singer's Bad Hat Harry Productions is set to produce an adaptation of Scott Chitwood's comic, *Haunted*. Chitwood's previous work includes *Drone* and *Dead or Alive*. His new horror action comic tells the story of Earth after the barrier between the human world and the spiritual realm is torn apart. There is no official date for the film's release yet, but the first comic of the four-part series will be in stores on April 30.

CHARLOTTE STEAR

MONSTRO BIZARRO

Could the Loch Ness Monster be dead? According to *The Inverness Courier*, "Nessie failed to make an appearance last year." A lack of sightings has led to speculation that the creature (or perhaps, creatures) may have died out. Gary Campbell, founder of The Loch Ness Monster Sighting Register, verified that "2013 was the first year since 1925 there has not been a registered sighting." That said, he believes it might have more to do with technology. "Pretty much everyone now carries a camera with them in their smart phone" Campbell explained in a press release. "The pictures and videos can prove to the expert eye that it wasn't Nessie being filmed." In other words, people are still seeing strange things in the loch, but oftentimes their videos allow experts to dismiss the report as ordinary occurrences such as waves or birds.

LYLE BLACKBURN

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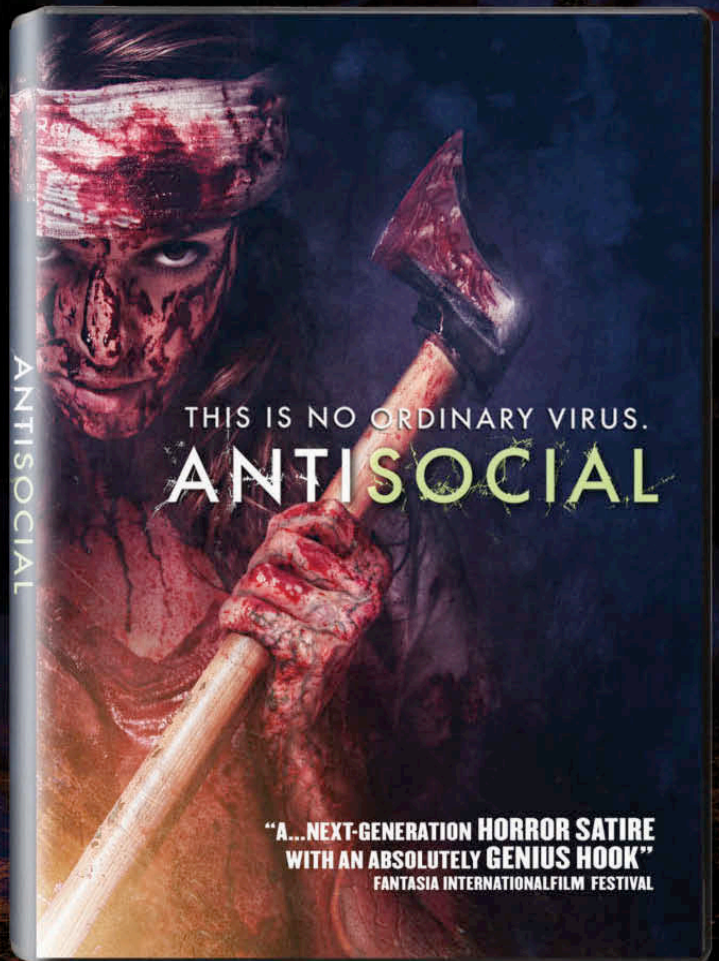


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CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO.

143

Earlier this year, a 26-year-old British body piercer cut off the skin on which she'd had her boyfriend's name tattooed and mailed it to him, after discovering he'd left her for another woman.

To boost slow ticket sales for Alice Cooper's 1972 show at Wembley Stadium, his manager, Shep Gordon, hired a billboard truck to drive through London's Piccadilly Circus and pretend to break down, causing a massive traffic jam. The news coverage resulted in a sold-out concert.

Franco Brun intentionally choked himself to death in his cell at a Toronto-area detention facility in 1987 by swallowing the small Gideon Bible the jail provided to each of its inmates.

Author Dennis Wheatley (*The Devil Rides Out*, *To the Devil – a Daughter*) is buried in Brookwood Cemetery, England's largest burial ground. The epitaph on his gravestone reads "Prince of Thriller Writers. RIP."

This February, doctors operating to remove a four-month-old's brain tumour found several fully developed teeth within the mass, confirming that the infant's form of cancer had spawned from the same cells that grow teeth.

Actor Robert Quarry (*Count Yorga, Vampire*, *Dr. Phibes Rises Again*) was hit by a drunk driver in the late '70s; his injuries from the accident were so severe that he had to take a nearly ten-year hiatus from acting to recover.

In 1998, a drunken university student in Quebec attempted to get a free Coke by jamming his arm into the machine's dispensing slot and violently rocking it. It tipped over and crushed him to death.

When the novels of mystery writer Agatha Christie and crime writer Cornell Woolrich were re-released in Italy, they were marketed as *gialli*.

"Taphophiles" are defined as people who have an obsessive interest in cemeteries, mausoleums and other places the dead are interred.

At the time of her death in 1965, author Shirley Jackson (*The Haunting of Hill House*) owned more than 500 books on the occult.

"To go to rest in a horse's nightcap" and "to be stabbed by a Bridport dagger" are both old English euphemisms for being hanged.

Due to strict moral codes and laws, no horror films were produced in India until the 1970s.

After the husband of a woman in the Congo's Bena Kanioka tribe died, it was custom that the woman be buried alive so that she could join him.

COMPILED BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM

BODY HORROR

CREEPSHOW

ARTIST: Mike Falcigno (facebook.com/mike.falcigno.9)

◀ "No film oozes more rancid EC charm than 1982's *Creepshow*. Being a Monster Kid pushing 40, it's most rewarding for me to adorn the flesh of new generations of horror fans. This shin belongs to my pal Lindsay Voytek; the tattoo is based on Bernie Wrightson's classic Creep mascot. Accompanying this first installment of fear will be five more comic panels, each showcasing a gruesome visage from the tales that comprise the film."

HAVE A GREAT HORROR TAT? SHARE IT WITH US AT: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM

THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX

CLAW-HAMMER CASUALTIES



1.

KILL LIST

PULVERIZED PEDERAST



2.

THE RAID 2

DUAL-ACTION SUBWAY CAR CARNAGE



3.

TOOLBOX MURDERS (2004)

SHERI MOON MINCEMEAT



4.

OLDBOY (2013)

BURIED IN THE BRAIN



5.

THE TOOLBOX MURDERS (1978)

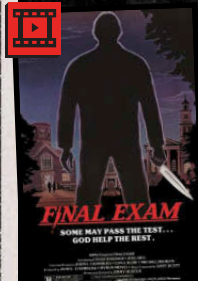
BALACLAVA KILLER'S BLUNT TRAUMA



6.

BLOOD AND LACE

BASHED UP IN BED



TORTURED TAGLINES

FINAL EXAM (1981)

"SOME MAY PASS THE TEST... GOD HELP THE REST."

Necronomicomics BY JAY P. FOSGITT



"LET ME HANDLE THIS, THOSE ME KIND OF PEOPLE!"

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NEEDFUL THINGS



1 BEAST OF BOGGY CREEK SCULPTURE

\$89 - \$179

Holy Fouke, our resident crypto expert/hunter Lyle Blackburn has teamed up with Resin Realities to release a series of sculptures of the Beast of Boggy Creek! Sculpted by Jean St. Jean, these 8" Fouke Monsters come as resin model kits, bronze-coloured statues and fully-painted figures – thankfully not offered in a scented version.

Live the legend exclusively at foukemonster.net.



2 RAM PRIEST ZIP-UP HOODIE

\$50

Black Craft Cult makes the most diabolical gear, including this Ram Priest hoodie with wickedly arcane prints on the front and sleeves, plus their logo on the hood. It's 80 percent cotton, 20 percent polyester and 100 percent pure evil.

The Devil may wear at blackcraftcult.com.



3 OUIJA COFFEE TABLE

\$850 - \$1200

Get yourself one of these beautiful, stylized Ouija-board coffee tables and the spirits'll be lining up to join you for a cup of joe and a natter. Available shapes include the classic rectangle and a cafe-style round version, both in knotty pine.

B-U-Y-O-N-E at bughouse.com.

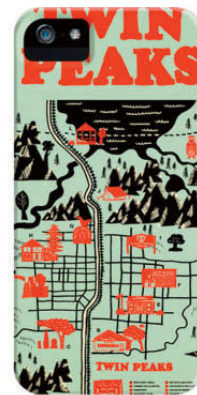


4 TWIN PEAKS IPHONE/IPOD CASE

\$35

If you need help locating a damn good cup of coffee and an equally good slice of cherry pie, attach this map of Twin Peaks to your phone or iPod, which will steer you from the Double R Diner to the Great Northern Hotel. Plus, the flexible plastic sheath will protect your device while running through the woods from One Eyed Jack's.

The owls are not what they seem at society6.com (search: "Twin Peaks map").



CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

TWIN PEAKS TRADING CARDS

(Stars Pics, Inc. 1991)

Despite its popularity, *Twin Peaks* only spawned a few pieces of merchandise, including this set of 76 trading cards. Featuring a photo on the front and a character bio (listing accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses) on the reverse, cards were created not only for

series regulars such as Sheriff Harry S. Truman, the Log Lady and killer BOB, but also for creator David Lynch, composer Angelo Badalamenti and singer Julee Cruise. Complete sets can be found on eBay for around \$20

JAMES BURRELL

MORE CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES AT RUE-MORGUE.COM



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CREW FROM DAVID LYNCH'S
TWIN PEAKS



The
PINES
and
**LAURA
PALMER**

by Andy Burns

“S HE’S DEAD, HARRY. WRAPPED IN PLASTIC.”

Those words, uttered with complete fear by actor Jack Nance, set the stage for a television show that redefined the way audiences would view episodic dramas. A quarter century after its debut, *Twin Peaks*’ influence continues to be felt.

Supernatural evil. Incest. Murder. *Twin Peaks* delivered them in a manner never before seen on network television. Co-created by director David Lynch and former *Hill Street Blues* writer Mark Frost, the series began with the brutal murder of high school homecoming queen Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee). Since she’s a seemingly perfect teenage daughter, her death sends shockwaves through the idyllic Northwest town of Twin Peaks, where soon, everyone becomes a suspect.

On the surface, it’s not a unique concept for a story, but in the hands of Lynch and Frost, *Twin Peaks* revolutionized the sorts of stories you could tell on TV, and the myriad characters that could permeate them. Here, every family was dysfunctional. Every citizen had a secret. To quote the show, “The owls are not what they seemed.”

Since making waves with his debut film, 1977’s *Eraserhead*, Lynch had carved out an impressive and idiosyncratic career. The best of his films (*The Elephant Man*, *Blue Velvet*, both of which he garnered him Oscar nominations for Best Director) were critically hailed, yet hardly mainstream fare, while his one big-budget Hollywood film, an adaptation of Frank Herbert’s classic (and complex) science fiction novel *Dune*, was a critical and commercial failure. Meanwhile, Lynch’s unique R-rated storytelling and filmmaking sensibilities appeared to be at direct odds with the content limitations of network television. However, by teaming up with Frost and *Miami Vice* creator Anthony Yerkovich, Lynch was able to see the merits of working on episodic TV. “A continuing story is a beautiful thing to me,” he recalled in a 2000 interview

with *Entertainment Weekly*. “And a mystery is a beautiful thing to me, so if you have a continuing mystery, it’s so beautiful. And you can go deeper into a story and discover so many things.”

Initially, Lynch and Frost crafted a town that would seem immediately familiar to audiences — a town businessman, a variety of prominent families, the local diner, the sheriff and his co-workers, and the outsider looking to solve the mystery. Familiarity would be the cushion for audiences when the story would turn these tropes on their heads. That town businessman would deal in murder, arson and brothels. Members of the sheriff’s department would also moonlight as a clandestine group of citizens banded together to protect the town from an evil that lives in the surrounding woods. Meanwhile, the FBI lawman would have a fetish for coffee, cherry pie and Tibetan mysticism.

When its two-hour pilot film finally aired on ABC on April 8, 1990, more than 34 million viewers in North America would tune in. It was an unexpected success, helped by the fact that Lynch was utilizing cinematic techniques such as long camera shots to give the series a unique look. Angelo Badalamenti’s haunting score was never intrusive while still being immediately memorable (the composer would win a Grammy in 1991 for his work on the show).

Problems arose when, for its second season, the network made the decision to move *Twin Peaks* to the wasteland that was Saturday night, and the show’s audience began dropping rapidly. By June 1991, at the end of season two, the series was cancelled, while Lynch’s 1992 theatrical prequel, the even darker *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, bombed.

Normally, that would be that, and *Twin Peaks* would have floated off into the ether. However, in the 2010s, the show is more alive than ever before. You can see its stylistic influence on series such as *The Killing*, *True Detective*, *Hannibal* and *Durham*



“WHAT ALWAYS DROVE ME WAS THAT EVERYBODY IN THE TOWN FELT GUILTY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO LAURA PALMER.”

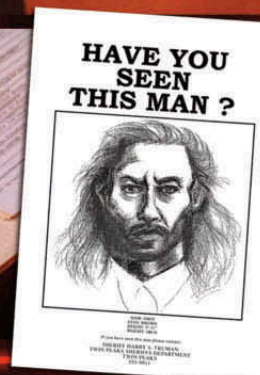
writer/producer
Robert Engels

County, while The Red Room and The Man from Another Place have been parodied on everything from *The Simpsons* and *Sesame Street* to *Scooby-Doo*. In 2010, the video game *Deadly Premonition* hit the Xbox 360, featuring a coffee-loving FBI agent sent to the town of Greentale to solve the murder of a young woman. Most recently, in January 2013, the internet was briefly on fire with unfounded rumours that David Lynch had actually met with ABC to consider a third season of the show. Plus, specialty soundtrack company Death Waltz announced plans to reissue both the TV show and movie scores on vinyl later this year, and Blu-ray special editions of the series and film are in the works, which will feature unseen footage.

Though it's been nearly 25 years since Pete Martell and television viewers first discovered Laura Palmer's body wrapped in plastic, for many of the writers and actors who played a part in its success, *Twin Peaks* still looms large. We caught up with stars Lee, Ray Wise (Laura's possessed father Leland), Dana Ashbrook (scheming bad boy Bobby Briggs), James Marshall (James Dean-type good boy James Hurley), Kimmy Robertson (geeky police station receptionist Lucy Moran), plus series writer/producer Harley Peyton, writer/producer Robert Engels and Lynch's daughter, filmmaker Jennifer Lynch, who wrote the 1990 spin-off novel *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*. Together they take us back to a town where murder and supernatural evil is as common as coffee and pie.

What was it like getting involved with the show initially?

JAMES MARSHALL: David Lynch was looking for what they called the “James Dean type.” Johanna Ray called me in, and I was flipping out because I couldn't believe I was going to meet him. There was a sense that this was something. So I get there and he says, “Oh my God, I can't believe you are the way you are, because I wasn't going to have you in. You're one of the last roles I'm casting, and I refused your picture because it looks like a boy band picture.” He was laughing and Johanna said, “It took me so long to get you in because David said your headshot is awful!” Ironically, he was refusing to see me, but at the time, the gentleman who was representing me, funny enough, was the guy who discovered James Dean.



Cooper's Case: Kyle MacLachlan as special agent Dale Cooper, and (inset) Laura Palmer's murder file and a wanted poster for BOB.

KIMMY ROBERTSON: I was told I was going in to audition for David Lynch and Mark Frost by my agent. I said, “For what?” and they said it was for a TV show. They gave me some material to read – it was Audrey and it was Shelly. I was ready to audition but I never actually did. They took a picture of me with a Polaroid. I sat down at a little round table with a halogen light directly overhead, which back then in 1989, you didn't see a lot of those. The room was black and just this light. It was really cool. I basically interrogated them.

DANA ASHBROOK: It was a pretty clean script. It was called *Northwest Passage* at the time. You knew when you read it that it was something different. Nothing like I'd ever seen before. I loved it. I thought it was amazing. I thought it was completely bizarre. And I was talking about it with Johanna's son, Eric DaRe, who played Leo; he was a casting assistant during that time with Johanna so he was always around. I was talking to Eric before I went in for my meeting with David and Mark about the weirdness of it, talking about Nadine and the silent drape runners and the patch on her eye and all that stuff.

ROBERT ENGELS: Mark Frost's father was my advisor in theatre school. I was close to Warren Frost, who was on the series, so I had known Mark since I was twenty and he was sixteen, something like that. We were old friends. I was out here in California developing a screenplay, and Mark called up out of the blue and asked, “Would you like to write an episode of *Twin Peaks*?” I wouldn't have known how to do a tel-

evision show with a gun to my head. I had a crash course with Mark, and he's the supreme TV writer. Just amazing.

HARLEY PEYTON: For many, many years, almost 25 years, I did those baseball stat leagues, where you go in and buy the players – rotisserie. And there was a team based on their love of the Minnesota Twins, and the two “owners” of the rotisserie team were Mark Frost and Bob Engels. So I got to know Mark in just a social way. We were friendly based on that. One day he just called me up and said, “Look, I have a screening at the Director’s Guild of this pilot I wrote, would you like to come see it?” And I said, “Okay,” and I was one of the people there at that first screening where everyone’s minds were blown by *Twin Peaks*.

Lynch had – and still has – a reputation as one of the strangest American filmmakers, and here he was out of his element, putting together a very mainstream television project. What was he like to work with on set?

KR: The way David Lynch worked with me was, he would get everyone to sit down somewhere quiet and then say, “Alright, so, Lucy, now the phone’s going to ring in the scene and the sheriff’s going to be nearby. Now, you are the centre of the centrifuge of *Twin Peaks*. You know everything that’s going on. Your nose is into everything but only because you want to help the sheriff and make sure that everybody’s safe. You don’t just use one carbon paper, you use two and three and triplicate so you’ve got plenty of backup.” He went on like that for a little while and I’m sitting there and he’s sitting next to me with his hand on my knee or on my shoulder sometimes. I know that he had to touch me so that he could get this magic message into the cellular structure of my body. Looking back, he just did this. He absolutely knew what he was doing. And his daughter does the exact same thing. I’ve never worked with anybody else who does it quite like them. He magnetizes everybody to be on the same page.

JM: He would vibe into things and give you the note of what he wanted. And it gave you a chance

LAURA PALMER HERSELF, *Sheryl Lee*, ON THE DEATH, LIFE AND AFTERLIFE OF THE MURDERED PROM QUEEN WHO CHANGED TELEVISION

SHE'S FULL of SECRETS

by Andy Burns

THE STORY OF TWIN PEAKS BEGINS WITH TRAGEDY: THE DEATH OF LAURA PALMER.

The murder of the sixteen-year-old homecoming queen gave the series its original raison d'être, as week after week, audiences watched as the town mourned her death while the law searched for her killer. Laura's appearance in the series pilot was key to making audiences care about the world they were entering. Cast in the role was an unknown aspiring theatre actor named Sheryl Lee.

“I got a call one day that David Lynch was in town and that they were going to be filming a very secretive television pilot around the Seattle area and would I come in and meet him?” recalls Lee during a phone conversation the night of February 24, 2014 – the 25th anniversary to the day of her character's murder. “It was a very short shoot at that time, doing flashbacks and then a few days of work as a corpse. David was so nice and funny and charming and warm that I felt comfortable with him immediately.”

Impressed with Lee, *Twin Peaks* creators Lynch and Mark Frost were eager to continue working with the actor and cast her as Maddy Ferguson, Laura's cousin from Missoula and a doppelgänger for the dead teen. It was during her time as Maddy that Lee really had the chance to experience Lynch's unique style at work.

“There was a scene on the TV series where I was playing Maddy and I was sitting in the diner with Lara [Flynn Boyle],” remembers Lee. “And it was cold and rainy and we were drinking coffee. And David's direction was along the lines of, ‘Okay, it's 1950 and it's summer and you're drinking milkshakes.’ Well, it wasn't 1950, it wasn't summer and we weren't drinking milkshakes. But he goes and tells us this whole thing and then says ‘Action!’ Now, if you're going to try to make sense of that with your logical mind, you're not going to be present to the moment. But if you surrender to [him], then by the time he says ‘action,’ you realize that he has taken you exactly where he wants to take you and he starts the scene from that place. It's like a brushstroke that he's just painted across you.”

Lynch and Frost's original plan for *Twin Peaks* was to allow the murder of Laura Palmer to fade into the background as audiences got to know the other people that lived in the town. However, during the show's second season, both ABC and audiences became restless. They wanted the murder resolved. As fate would then have it, along with playing a dead ringer for her first character on the show, Lee would have the dubious distinction of being killed by Lynch a second time, when it was revealed, during one of the most horrific scenes ever shot for television, that Laura's father, Leland (Ray Wise), was her killer. Audiences watched in shock as he, possessed by the series' omnipresent evil spirit, BOB, brutally attacked and murdered Maddy in the Palmer living room.

“That scene, I remember very well,” says Lee. “That might have been one of the longest days of my whole career. We

had to film Maddy's death scene with three different actors, because David didn't want the crew to know who killed Laura, either. So we filmed it once with Ray, once with [Richard Beymer's character] Ben Horne, and once with BOB [Frank Silva]. That was all in one brutal day.”

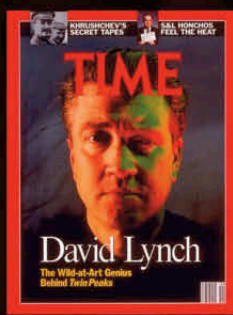
In true Lynch fashion, though, the director wasn't quite done with his leading lady. Following the cancellation of *Twin Peaks* in the summer of 1991, the two would reunite for the feature *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, which would focus on the last seven days of Laura Palmer's life. Part of Lee's preparation for her return to the role would come from reading *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*. Written by Lynch's daughter, Jennifer, the book detailed Laura's life from adolescence through to the final days before her death, giving both fans and Lee a greater insight into the character's mind.

“Part of my education as an actor was to write bios for my characters,” asserts Lee, “and of course, I didn't write anything as eloquent as Jennifer did. But just the little notes I had taken about who Laura was before I played her; it was so synchronous. I hadn't told anybody. I felt like Jennifer was in my head, meaning Laura's head. And I always feel this intimate connection with Jennifer because of that. There's something there that connects us, having experienced that character that way.”

Released at the end of August 1992, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* is highlighted by incredible performances from both Lee and Wise. Together, they depict the horrors of abuse and incest in a manner never before seen on screen. While critics and audiences initially rejected the movie for being too dark and not nearly as fun or quirky as the series, virtually everyone who saw it was struck by Lee's work. One moment soft and vulnerable, the next strung out on drugs and alcohol, the character's hellish existence remains captivating. It's a legacy that Lee accepts with both grace and humility.

“I was there and I filmed it and I brought whatever I could to it, but it's almost like, I painted a painting and gave that painting to somebody else and the painting lived on, but I went ahead and died. It's that piece of art that lives on, and I was fortunate to be a part of it.”





Dreams And Nightmares: (clockwise from top) Agent Cooper in a vision of *The Red Room* with Laura (Sheryl Lee) and *The Man from Another Place* (Michael J. Anderson), Lynch on the cover of *Time*, and Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine) barely survives BOB.

to play with it a little, so if something did come up, it was allowed. ... [The script] was so moving, and so disturbingly real that it took me right in. You didn't have to work to do the lines. It was already there, at least for my character.

I completely identified with it. It was just beautifully written. It was poetry. It had these strange and beautiful rhythms.

DA: He's completely different in the way he would approach direction. He'll tell you a dream he had or a feeling or

about a music piece, and give you the vibe that way. He's more apt to be ethereal in his direction, which makes it so fun and beautiful and a fun place to hang out.

From a writer's perspective, was the experience also that ethereal?

HP: *Twin Peaks* wasn't a show that was made up as we went along, but it also wasn't a show that was planned out with a huge long-term goal that you were going to follow in terms of every episode being up on a board. We didn't have that. ... I'm from the Northwest so a lot of the mythology, a lot of the feeling of it, was familiar to me. I felt very comfortable writing for [the show]. The first thing you had to do as a writer was figure out the voice of Cooper, which came, for whatever reason, easily, which was a lucky thing. It was just so much fun to be working on something like that, and to have that opportunity, because I'd loved the pilot so much. And, of course, I was a huge fan of Lynch's as well.

RE: What always drove me was that everybody in the town felt guilty about what happened to Laura Palmer. So the trick in writing that, the task in writing that, was you tried to make every scene about that. You had all the dynamics of each family, but somehow everybody felt bad about that. I hate the word "subtext" but that was it. Everybody was guilty. And that's what I used all the time to write those scenes; that somehow they all felt they could have done something else and that's why the town is falling apart, which makes for real fun, because [a scene] can be about what's for dinner, but it's not about that.

The show exploded into pop culture. Was there always a sense that something so strange would take network television by storm?

KR: I was sitting in the DGA at the screening — I wore shoes without heels so I could run out before the lights came up like I usually did when stuff I was in [screened]. And my mouth was just hanging open; from the time it started till the end of the credits.

HP: It was an amazing time. You were in the middle of this weird firestorm. That August, David was on the cover of *Time* magazine, when that really meant something. It was crazy for the actors, they all went nuts, and I mean that in an affectionate way. It was just such a big blast of focus for everybody. It was a very big deal. Everyone was crazed about it.

RE: I liked the pilot a lot. I mean, who doesn't? I think it wound up on the *New York Times* list of the best films of that year. You hear the term "groundbreaking pilot" all the time, and I say, "Well, I'll show you one." There are a couple of them, but *Twin Peaks* is one that changes everything.

DA: There was a lot of stuff going on, like talk shows, and everybody was trying to do that stuff. I'd done five or six movies up to that point and nothing had been well received, so it was fun to be on something that people were liking. We weren't as aware of all the stuff as the marketing people were with the "Who killed Laura Palmer," "damn good pie," etc. I didn't think about all that. It was crazy when you started seeing all that stuff. It was like, "Wow, the machine is in motion." We did the first



Ray Wise REFLECTS ON PLAYING DEMONICALLY POSSESSED LOVING FATHER LELAND PALMER



DADDY DARKEST

by Andy Burns

BEGINNING WITH THE PILOT EPISODE OF *TWIN PEAKS*, RAY WISE'S CHARACTER, LELAND PALMER, WOULD BE PUT THROUGH THE EMOTIONAL WRINGER TIME AND TIME AGAIN, AS HE DEALT WITH THE REPERCUSSIONS OF HIS DAUGHTER'S MURDER. One moment he would be wailing uncontrollably, the next he would break into a random, manic dance. When Wise — who had already worked with the likes of Wes Craven (*Swamp Thing*), Paul Verhoeven (*Robocop*) and Paul Schrader (*Cat People*) — was cast in the pivotal role of Laura Palmer's father, it didn't take long for him to get into the character's tortured headspace.

"It was almost immediate," he recalls. "For several reasons. I have a facility to get to that place where I can feel sorrowful pretty easily. And I had a small daughter at the time; she

seven [episodes] and the pilot before anyone knew who we were, and then the second season publicity hit, so it was different.

Of course, the second season answered the big question of who killed Laura Palmer. How did the big reveal unfold?

JENNIFER LYNCH: My father called me, I guess it was a few months into the first season, and he said, "Jen-o, do you remember that day I picked you up from school and you told me that you were thinking about finding another girl's diary?" And I said, "Yes, I'm surprised you remember that." He said, "Well, it stuck with me. Tell me about that again." And I said, I figured if I could find this diary, just tuck it under my jacket and get home with it, I could find out whether or not she feared or yearned for the same things I did. If I was good or bad based on some of the feelings I was having, about others, about myself, about my own body, etc, etc. He said, "I would like to know if you would like to write Laura Palmer's diary?" And I said, "Fuck, yeah!" So I guess it was about a week later that I went in and met with him and Mark, and that was when they closed the door and told me who killed Laura. They said, "You know whom she deals with. You know who's done it, you go ahead and you write whatever you think is best," and I was really given total freedom.

RE: I knew; Mark and David knew; [editor] Mary Sweeney, who was living with David then knew. We weren't supposed to tell anybody, but obviously my wife knew. It was a small group. But we had to know at a point because it just

affected the writing. You had to know that it was Leland to stay away from certain things or protect the surprise. And we went to great lengths to protect that too, in the sense that I think we wrote four different scenes saying someone else was the murderer, as I recall. ... Then on the day, Mark and David went and told Ray Wise it was him. And I think Ray said, "Does that mean I'm out of the series?" And David said, "I don't do things that way. Don't worry about that, buddy."

HP: The actors were all trying to figure it out.

DA: The revelation that it was her dad, I thought it was just a fucked-up thing.

When he appeared as BOB, it was truly the stuff of nightmares.

JL: I could be way off, but part of me is pretty convinced that BOB is as much a creation of Laura's, so she doesn't see her father, as BOB is a creation of Leland's, so he's not really doing it. So whatever that evil is, whatever that dysfunction is, it's also that protective mechanism where the two of them have designed it so that there's this dialogue happening. Laura couldn't change who she was, because she was so innocent and young, but she had to change who was hurting her. And Leland as a man and a father and as this broken abuser ... it had to be given another name and another face. In my consciousness, they both created it, without obviously discussing it.

RE: Both the incest and the violence threw me, because I didn't think of it that way. I was much more in the process of thinking it was BOB inside of

was about two years old, so I could relate to the whole father/daughter relationship, [and] I could tap into those feelings too. Leland became perfectly suited to me very quickly."

It helped that Wise developed a strong bond with both his onscreen wife, Grace Zabriskie, and Sheryl Lee, who would play both Laura Palmer and her cousin, Maddy Ferguson.

"We were very close," says Wise. "When we were making the pilot, Sheryl gave me a picture of herself; I believe it was her fourth-grade picture. I put it in my wallet and I kept that wallet with me in all the Leland Palmer scenes. I was always carrying her picture. I felt close to her and I felt the father-daughter relationship."

Wise was unaware at the time that all the grief Leland was displaying ended up being a mask for the character, who was shockingly revealed as the murderer of Laura Palmer early in the second season. Wise admits that it wasn't the resolution he was hoping for to the question, "Who killed Laura Palmer?"

"I certainly knew that I was one of many who could possibly have done it," he says. "And I certainly didn't want it to be me. Number one, I didn't want to leave town, and number two, the thought of being the killer of my own daughter was anathema to me. It was the most terrible thought that I could conjure up in my brain. I was hoping and praying it wasn't me."



Cold Light Of Day: Sherilyn Fenn as Ben Horne's daughter Audrey, and Frank Silva as evil entity BOB.

Leland. For me, it was more about thinking that Leland was possessed. Clearly I was aware that it was incest. I was more interested in how a being could be inside Leland and how that worked. That helped me write stuff for Leland.

HP: The first seven episodes of the second season leading up to the death of Leland Palmer, I would put up against any television show in the history of tel-

evision. That run to his death [in the jail cell], that was Mark writing the hell out of it and David directing it. That episode is one of the most stirring episodes of television I have ever seen, when Leland dies in jail. It's every bit as amazing today as it was then. Ray Wise was so good in the show, from doing Fred Astaire soft-shoe to the realization that he killed his daughter. It was extraordinary. I think the second season is underrated. It became sort of fashionable to say, "The first season was awesome, the second one was terrible."

What are your thoughts on the so-called decline of the series after the murder is solved?

HP: There was still pretty good stuff going on, lots of fun stuff that people forget about, including David Duchovny as the transvestite FBI agent. When had

Unfortunately for Wise, his prayers went unanswered: the actor received the news of his character's fate moments prior to shooting the death of Maddy.

"David called us into a room at our studio," he remembers. "It was dark. I think there was a lava lamp in the corner. It was me and Sheryl Lee and Richard Beymer [who played local hotel owner Benjamin Horne]; I believe [show co-creator] Mark Frost was there too. We all sat down on the floor cross-legged and after sitting there for a few seconds, David leaned over and touched me on the knee and said, 'Ray, it's you, it was always you.' It just blew my mind."

In the hands of Lynch, the scene in which Leland — possessed by the demonic force BOB — beats Maddy to death remains absolutely horrifying 25 years later. Wise found it particularly difficult.

"It was very extreme, visceral emotions," he says. "You feel it all throughout your body and your head, and you have to be able to handle it and control it. And you have to be able to get yourself in the right place and the right frame of mind before you start shooting it. Whatever it takes to do that, that's what you have to do."

He adds that the intensity of what he had to do on *Twin Peaks* often threatened to overwhelm him.

"There were a lot of dark moments making that show," he acknowledges, "where I had to go sit in a corner and just think about what I had to do." 🍷



The Bad, The Good And The Geeky: (from top) Dana Ashbrook as Bobby Briggs, James Marshall as James Hurley, and Kimmy Robertson as Lucy Moran.

“*Twin Peaks* ALLOWED HUMAN BEINGS TO START SHOWING UP ON TV”

Jennifer Lynch

that been done before? And then you get to the last episode. We each wrote an act, but then David came in, tossed everything out the window and said, “Yeah, I’m not doing this.” That’s the only time that happened. At the time it was like, “Aw, fuck him, what’s he doing?” And then you saw the result and went “Okay.” It took it to another level. Even though none of us wanted the show to end, it was the perfect ending for it.

KR: I know that David Lynch was trying desperately to help the show, because he’d been gone doing *Wild at Heart*. I’d been around television long enough, I should have known that what they do is, somebody creates the show and gets it up on its feet, and then they move on and start doing something else, creating another show or making a movie. I wasn’t ready for that, but I should have been.

JM: On one hand, we were all so grateful to be working as actors, with somebody so good, and being a part of it. But on the other hand, we were very close to the characters and felt personally tied to them, so it was like taking it personally. To me, it should have gone in the realm it was going, very organically.

DA: I wasn’t too crazy about the fact they were softening me up so much. I just went with it. I didn’t know any better, I was happy to have a job. But in retrospect, they had such a good thing with Bobby and Shelly, it was such a good storyline, it was such good chemistry, and they tried to force it elsewhere. There was other stuff politically that went down, with the Cooper character supposed to end up with Audrey and that didn’t end up happening. They tried to spread out the stories so much. It was what it was. There was some stuff that happened that was brilliant. The Cooper stuff that went down in the Black Lodge, I loved that.

That brings us to Fire Walk with Me.

RE: As I recall, David had a meeting with [production company] CIBY-2000, which was going to make three movies with him. He came back from the meeting and he said, “I’ve talked to Monsieur Bouygues [who ran the company], and he will add a fourth movie to this, and I want to do a movie of *Twin Peaks*.”

JM: When you watch the series or vibe on the series and then you see the feature, for me it’s like adding a dimension to it.

DA: [*Fire Walk with Me*] was great. We went back to the same place where we had shot the pilot, up in Seattle, up in White Oaks. It was kind of revisit-

ing two years before, a perfect circle kind of thing. I loved doing the movie. One of my favourite scenes is that one in the woods with Sheryl Lee when we’re out there and we shoot the guy in the head, and the cocaine and all the drugs and alcohol and stuff that we’re doing while we’re out there.


Why has the show grown in popularity over the past 25 years?

KR: It’s a complete package that was interesting and that hadn’t been done before, and David Lynch put his artistic stamp on it. Mark Frost knew how to make things interesting for television. It was time and we were there, and it all just worked out.

JM: It rings a truth. It’s its own sort of brilliance. It shifted so many different parts of television. [*Sopranos* creator] David Chase was a huge *Twin Peaks* fan, and he was making the New Jersey version of *Twin Peaks*. It just changed everything.

RE: David always said *Twin Peaks* was about cool people doing cool things. Even BOB is cool. I think the angst of those people is real. It’s like seeing a play that’s 40 years old and you’re stunned that you’re so moved by it. And that’s credit to David and Mark that it so captured something about human nature that lasts. It just speaks to a human emotion that’s timeless, that’s real. It seems so real. There is a Bobby in every high school class. There just is, and he’s a cool guy, and you like him because he’s messed up. He’s not just what he says he is. I think with the case of *Twin Peaks*, we had such an opportunity to do that for a whole series, and thanks to Mark and David, it held up.

JL: I see *Twin Peaks* in every good show I see. I see it in *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*. I see it in *Luther*. I see it in *Sherlock*. I see it in *The Killing*. I see it in *Breaking Bad*. Because what it did was, say, you can do this here. [TV] doesn’t have to be the *Sonny and Cher* show all the time. And it doesn’t have to be *Good Times*. There was nothing wrong with those shows, but there was a real form here for reaching in and getting people where they sat in their underwear, at home, and you could whisper to them and talk about things that only certain independent films talked about. And suddenly you were talking about them in your own house, and they had a bigger impact. *Twin Peaks* allowed human beings to start showing up on TV.

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"ONE OF THE GREATEST ACTION MOVIES EVER MADE" - COLLIDER



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THE ULTRA GORY ZOMBIES-IN-'NAM COMIC '68 SOLDIERS ON
WITH FRESH HELLS IN ITS ROTTEN UNIVERSE



BY
APRIL
SNELLINGS

NAT

WHEN IT COMES TO WHOLESALÉ NIGHTMARES, A ZOMBIE UPRISING HAS NOTHING ON THE VIETNAM WAR. THE DEATH TOLL WAS STAGGERING. DURING THE COURSE OF IT, THE US

military's Casualty Notification Officers, tasked with delivering the worst news imaginable to a service member's next of kin, performed their grim duty more than 58,000 times. Conservative estimates place the total number of war dead at just over 1 million; other sources claim that as many as 3.8 million people, civilians and soldiers alike, died during the nineteen years of fighting that tore through Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia between 1956 and 1975.

Given our enduring fascination with rotter rebellions, it was only a matter of time before someone put a concerted effort into reanimating all those corpses. Writer Mark Kidwell, artist Nat Jones and colourist Jay Fotos have done just that with '68, an ongoing series comprised of consecutive miniseries and one-shots, housed at Image Comics. Since it first put boots on the ground with a 2006 one-shot and returned five years later with a four-issue miniseries, '68 has grown into a sprawling epic that juxtaposes gnarly zombie grue and bloody combat violence with the social and political unrest that reigned in the late 1960s. In the world of '68, the real-life apocalypse that ravaged Southeast Asia is made all the more hellish by throngs of ravenous deaders.

The series' first multi-issue arc, which debuted in April 2011, takes place over a two-day period in February 1968 – less than two weeks after the launch of the Tet Offensive. Those early issues of the comic introduced readers to a group of US soldiers stationed at the fictional Firebase Aries in the central highlands of Vietnam. They are the first to realize that soldiers dying on the battlefield, American and North Vietnamese alike, aren't staying dead. A young Chinese-American infantryman named Kuen Yam emerges as the tale's unlikely hero when the rest of his unit is slain, leaving him to fight his way through a jungle infested with both enemy soldiers and zombies.

"There are a couple things that initially led to Yam becoming our lead focus in '68," Kidwell explains. "First, in keeping with the tone and subtexts utilized by [George A.] Romero and [screenwriter John] Russo in *Night of the Living Dead* – casting a black man in the film's lead role was rare and groundbreaking in the 1960s – I wanted main character emphasis to fall on a person who didn't exactly fit the standard American-hero stereotype. Yam is an Asian-American – a minority, especially in the US infantry circa 1968. He's not the Rambo model, he's just a kid trying to represent his country, do his part, make his

parents proud and show his fellow troops that he's just like them."

That's a challenge for the likeable young soldier, though; as far as Private Yam's colleagues are concerned, the Chinese-American infantryman has more in common with the enemy than with them. They even call him "Little Charlie," a play on the military's phonetic nomenclature for enemy Viet Cong fighters. Yam proves himself pretty tough, though, when he encounters a rotting but very ambulatory monstrosity while trying to flush out a Viet Cong tunnel.

That sequence, which pits him against a sort of hive-zombie comprised of the decaying, fused bodies of several Viet Cong fighters, was the first indication of the batshit detours '68 has since taken from traditional shambler lore. Besides the seven-armed, five-headed rotter Yam encounters underground, '68 has given us zombies that have been stitched together, rigged with explosives, and otherwise booby-trapped. In one particularly nightmarish panel, a zombie's midsection has become a nesting place for live snakes, turning it into a grotesque hybrid of a Fulci-esque skinbag and a Greek gorgon.

"We really want to show you something different in '68 – a new way to look at what the reanimated dead can be," agrees Jones, an artist who has lent his talents to such four-colour genre fare as Frank Frazetta's *Death Dealer* and Rob Zombie's *The Nail*. "There are a lot of zombie stories out there, and it's hard to set yourself apart from the masses with a unique take. I really think we're doing that, and the fans seem to agree."

The snake gag, incidentally, was inspired by stories recounted by Kidwell's father, who served as a Merchant Marine during the Vietnam War and frequently watched divers pull writhing hordes of live snakes from boat propellers. As evidenced by the brief history lessons that conclude each issue, the series' creators are keen on rooting their flesh-chewing epic in the real-life horrors that were broadcast into living rooms all over the world as

the war in Vietnam escalated.

"We've all done tons of research on not only the Vietnam War but the entire period of the late 1960s," says Kidwell. "The whole framework behind the series depends heavily on depicting an accurate slice of history before injecting the dark fantasy elements of the rise of the dead, so we all needed



a firm grasp on the politics, social disorder, weaponry, clothing, dialogue, etc., of those years."

Besides the obvious appeal of waking the dead in the throes of one of modern history's bloodiest wars, the creators point out that '68's timeframe has other advantages as well.

"For me, the era was ideal in that there was less technology floating around, and day-to-day life required more of a hands-on approach," says Fotos, whose work has also been seen in the pages of *30 Days of Night* and *Locke & Key*. "I think that's what I like most about it. If '68 were set in modern times, we would see a lot of military button-pushing rather than a demolition expert running a trip wire or engaging in hand-to-hand combat."

"The lower tech definitely gives us an avenue toward heightened suspense," Kidwell agrees. "With modern gadgets like cellphones and robot-guided weaponry, it's really sort of hard to fathom how a zombie outbreak could completely squash civilization in such short order."

Though '68 is set nearly a half-century ago, Kidwell and company have found the series to be remarkably timely. Though fears that the American-led "War on Terror" would become another Vietnam have (so far) gone unrealized, there are plenty of 21st-century parallels to the troubled Age of Aquarius.

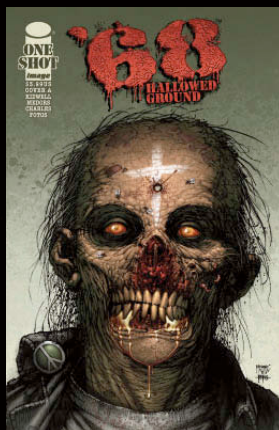
**WE'RE MORE OF A FLYING,
DECAPITATED, DROOLING
HEAD BOOK.**

**— MARK KIDWELL
WRITER**

"The things going on in the late '60s are very similar to the overall world situation happening right now," notes Kidwell, whose resume also includes creature and special FX makeup design for Robert Kurtzman's *Precinct 13*. "The US is involved in wars that the citizenry doesn't totally agree with, government power abuse is everywhere, drug use has become overwhelmingly widespread and the country's entire moral compass goes out of whack on an hourly basis. There are a lot of things for modern readers to identify with."

Astute horror fans will no doubt pick up on yet another reason for the series' specific timeframe: it's no coincidence that '68 takes place in the year that saw the release of a certain canonical bit of zombie cinema.

"If you take *Night of the Living Dead*'s release year as the gospel in



determining the exact timing of the rise of the hungry dead," Kidwell rationalizes, "you have to ask yourself, 'What was going on in the rest of the world in 1968 while corpses were sitting up and eating people in rural Pennsylvania? The obvious answer is, of course, Vietnam.'"

"Also keep in mind that 1968 was the most intense year of the war," adds Jones, "starting with Tet happening right at the beginning of the year."

If it sounds ambitious, well, it is. While '68 spends most of its time in the napalm-cooked jungles and razed villages of Vietnam, the creators occasionally swing the camera around to show us how the home front is faring. (Hint: not well.) One gory subplot centres on an ill-fated antiwar demonstration in Berkeley, California, where hippies and black militants cross intestine-strewn paths with riot police and skinbags. In 2011, a one-shot called *Hardship*, drawn by Jeff Zornow, told the story of a disturbed soldier's return to his Nebraska hometown just as the dead are getting hungry, while last year's *Hallowed Ground* (art by Fotos) saw two recently discharged soldiers defending a Mississippi church from an undead onslaught.

This month broadens the scope of the series even more with the first installment of *Rule of War*, a four-issue miniseries that hones in on a character introduced back in 2011. When readers first met CIA agent

THE UPCOMING GRAPHIC NOVEL **FUBAR: MOTHER RUSSIA** PITS A LONE SOVIET SNIPER AGAINST A LEGION OF ZOMBIES

**BETTER RED THAN
UNDEAD**
APRIL SNELLINGS

HAD THE DEAD RISEN DURING WORLD WAR II, THEY'D HAVE DONE WELL TO STEER CLEAR OF SOVIET SNIPERS. THE LEGENDARY SHARPSHOOTERS COULD PUT A BULLET IN A BRAIN FROM HALF A MILE AWAY, AND RAINED DOWN ALL KINDS OF HELL ON INVADING NAZI TROOPS.

Incidentally, some 2000 of those stone-cold, rifle-toting badasses were women.

It's appropriate, then, that the upcoming graphic novel *FUBAR: Mother Russia* sees a female Soviet sniper picking off throngs of shamblers during the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943. Scheduled for a May release, *Mother Russia* is the latest installment of a popular, independently published comic series that re-imagines world history through the blood-smeared lens of a zombie outbreak.

"Our main character is an infamous female sniper in zombie-occupied Stalingrad," says writer/artist and *FUBAR* co-creator Jeff McComsey. "Svetlana 'Mother Russia' Gorshkov has to make a few uneasy alliances to make her way back to the safety of her perch with a newly rescued eighteen-month-old baby that likes to cry when he's scared, which is all the time. There will be lots of fun character stuff and a metric ton of exploding zombie heads."

FUBAR (a military acronym for "Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition") was born in 2008 as a collaboration between McComsey and fellow illustrator Steve Becker. It began as a World War II-themed anthology inspired by classic EC Comics and Warren Publishing titles such as *Two-Fisted Tales*, *Frontline Combat*, and McComsey's personal favourite, *Blazing Combat*.

"We had a few of my WWII zombie mini-comics and one of Steve's unemployment cheques lying around, so we figured we'd see if any of my other indie comic writer and artist friends were interested in doing similar shorts," McComsey recalls. "It turns out they were! We took those stories and my stories and Steve's cheque and got the first run of *FUBAR: European Theater of the Damned* printed."

That volume included fifteen short stories by McComsey, Becker and other indie comics creators. *European Theater of the Damned*, which mostly revolved around the theme of Allied soldiers smoking Nazi zombies across Europe, would go on to sell out its first print run.

The next *FUBAR* anthology, *Empire of the Rising Dead*, shifted the action to the Pacific Theatre. That volume, funded via Kickstarter, scored an impressive coup, debuting at #6 on the *New York Times* Graphic Books Best Sellers list in January 2012. With the following year's *American History Z*, the creators expanded *FUBAR*'s



Declan Rule, he was playing chaperone to a Hollywood starlet whose Jane Fonda-inspired antiwar message was cut short when she was eaten by zombies. Though Rule's true agenda was only hinted at in '68's inaugural storyline, he's about to move to the front lines.

"The arc focuses on Rule's search for a twisted neurosurgeon who, in transforming unwilling 'patients' into hard-wired, explosive suicide bombers, stumbled onto and murdered Rule's son," Kidwell elaborates. "Rule [has] gone rogue from his CIA handlers and he wants revenge. ... [The doctor] has shifted his maniacal attentions to the newly risen dead, creating rotting, drooling time bombs wired for massacre, controlled by radio frequency and hungry for flesh."

According to Kidwell, *Rule of War* will make good on the promise of zombie evolution that was teased in last year's '68 *Jungle Jim: Hellhole*. That four-issue story centred on a soldier scouring the jungles of Vietnam for the zombified remains of a US Army officer, now a lurcher who has somehow retained some aspects of his former, living self – another nod to Romero's iconic zombie franchise.

"You'll start seeing glimpses of potentially 'smarter' ghouls," Kidwell teases. "Undead, [but] with enough residue of their former selves to function several steps higher mentally than the vast ma-

jority of their shambling brethren. In creating the '68 stories, we decided early on to stay as faithful as possible to the rules that *NotLD* established for the living dead. We've advanced and tweaked some of those theories, but the basic ones, like zombies using crude weapons or attempting to return to activities and places important to them in life, have been kept solid, and now we're expanding on them."

In spite of the incredibly graphic violence – faces are sliced off, brains and eyeballs are routinely ejected from skulls, and jagged bones protrude from bloodied stumps in the aftermath of zombie attacks, booby traps and firefights – you can't help feeling some hardcore nostalgia for pre-Code horror and war comics in the pages of '68. Jones cites legendary artist and Sgt. Rock co-creator Joe Kubert as a major source of inspiration, while Kidwell's style has been shaped by EC comics such as *Tales from the Crypt*

and *The Vault of Horror*. Those titles might seem quaint by today's standards, but Kidwell says '68 owes its penchant for gory spectacle and hell-for-leather pacing to those classic dime-store chillers.

"From a script standpoint, everything I do and have done is heavily influenced by the classic EC comics of yesterday," the writer allows. "If you refer to those amazing nuggets of horror history, you can watch those creators cram huge amounts of story into six to eight pages, not wasting a panel, but somehow keeping the tension, suspense and especially the action rolling at a freight-train pace. That's what I wanted for '68 ... We're not a 'talking head' comic. We're more of a flying, decapitated, drooling head book."

For all of '68's delirious violence and goopy zombie action, though, there's a rotting elephant in the room: the Vietnam War itself. The series' creative team has embraced many of the real-life horrors of war along with the pulpy menace of the walking dead; the ugly spectres of torture, rape and geno-

scope to include the whole of US history.

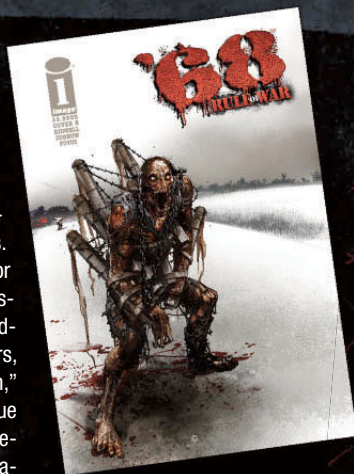
Mother Russia, financed by a Kickstarter campaign that raised a stunning \$95,908 (the goal was \$3500), is the franchise's first stand-alone graphic novel. McComsey says the move to a longer narrative format is a natural part of *FUBAR*'s evolution, motivated both by his growth as a storyteller and by fan requests for meatier tales.

"You can tell quite a bit of story in an eight-page short, but if you want to really have people invest in a character, you need to give them an arc that isn't really possible with the short-story format," he says.

For some readers, though, the most exciting aspect of *Mother Russia* will be its unusual main character. Female leads are becoming more common in horror comics, but they're almost unheard of in war titles.

"It's a welcome change artistically from drawing the grizzled soldier of WWII," McComsey says of his decision to put a woman in the sniper's nest. "The themes that run through *Mother Russia* have to do with parental instincts and what that means in the zombie apocalypse. I feel those themes are best illustrated with an interesting female lead. One of my favourite female characters has always been Ellen Ripley from the *Alien* films. She combines flawlessly the vulnerability needed to empathize with her character, and also the toughness to not only battle horrifying aliens but to be the toughest person in a room filled with badass Space Marines. I've wanted to write a character like that for a while, and I think *Mother Russia* is that character."

Look for *Mother Russia* next month, along with *FUBAR*'s 2014 Free Comic Book Day release, *The Ace of Spades*, which hits participating stores on May 3. 🍀



War Through The Ages: A medieval zombie from the first issue of *FUBAR, By The Sword*.

cide haunt the gutters between '68's gory panels and are sometimes more horrific than the book's over-the-top rotter attacks. One gruesome panel in *Homecoming* shows the murder of a human child by his PTSD-afflicted older brother, while a female character – one of the few in the series so far – in *Hellhole* suffers a heinous fate at the hands of marauding soldiers.

"The men and women who served in Vietnam were only there, doing what they did, at the behest and orders of their respective countries," says Kidwell, on the challenges of spinning a monster tale against such a contentious backdrop. "I doubt if any of those non-commissioned, front-line grunts, nurses, etc., were at the table when the powers that be decided to invade Southeast Asia. So, you just try to depict everybody as a person, with all the disparate baggage and drive, loves, hates, individual desires and prejudices that everyone has."

"I remember I was a little nervous about some things at first," agrees Fotos, who hopes the series' strong emphasis on historical accuracy proves the team's respect for the real-life victims of war violence. "The Vietnam War wasn't very popular by any means, so we really tried to watch our Ps and Qs in telling the story."

That mindfulness extends to the book's political stance – or lack thereof. Even five decades after the war reached its bloody peak, it's still a controversial subject, particularly in the US. Kidwell says he and his colleagues quickly decided that '68 wouldn't become a forum for political commentary.

"We've all got our political views – even the separate members of '68's creative team," the writer says. "We don't all march behind the same banner. This doesn't colour the series at all, and that is by design. ... You'll see some politics and some politicians in '68, see and hear what they actually did and said. As far as deciding whether he or she knew what the hell they were talking about – we're leaving that up to you."

One thing is clear about the politics of a zombie apocalypse, though: regardless of the colours you fly, everyone is gristle for the meat grinder. As '68 closes out its third year as an ongoing series, it's headed for uncertain territory, veering ever farther into the realm of alternate history. Lyndon B. Johnson is dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Vietnam is a no-man's-land overrun by rotters, and America is quite literally eating itself.

As *Rule of War* takes off this month, the crew intends to up the ante. The Vietnam War is over, but the end of the world is just gearing up. Besides following Private Yam and Agent Rule as they make their way across Vietnam (independently, at least for now), Kidwell says we'll see more of what's going on in the US as shit gets increasingly weirder in Asia. He also promises the return of the masked badass known as Jungle Jim – probably the closest thing you'll ever see to a superhero in the pages of '68 – as well as one of the series' most memorable human villains: a young naval officer who went insane after his first mission, and now wears the flayed faces of the Navy SEAL team he

was sent to rescue.

"The war is over from the standpoint of the countries involved with the actual Vietnam police action, but the situation with the dead has turned the whole theatre into a demilitarized zone," Kidwell explains. "Think of it as the Wild West, where anything goes." 🦋



Cut Down Your Enemies: Mysterious super-soldier Jungle Jim hacks his way through the rotten things.

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IN MIKE FLANAGAN'S EVIL MIRROR MOVIE **OCULUS**, NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS

WAS ALWAYS ALWAYS YOU

BY
SEAN PLUMMER

WHEN I ASK IF SHE EVER PLAYED BLOODY MARY AS A KID, I CAN ALMOST HEAR KAREN GILLAN NODDING ON THE OTHER END OF THE PHONE LINE FROM LOS ANGELES.

The Scottish star of the upcoming horror film *Oculus*, about an evil mirror that torments its owners to death, has vivid memories of playing the game, in which the goal is to conjure the spirit of the titular character (some say it refers to Mary, Queen of Scots) by repeating her name in a mirror multiple times.

"I remember that exact game," she says. "I just remember being a really young child at school and being in a toilet on my own — there was no one else there — and just looking in a mirror, and I was like, 'Don't say it in your head.' And I'm, like, staring in the mirror. And you know when you can't do something and your brain immediately wants to do it? I remember just running out of the bathroom."

Oculus stars Gillan (*Doctor Who*) and Brenton Thwaites (the upcoming *Maleficent*) as siblings Kaylie and Tim Russell. Ten years after the violent deaths of their parents Alan (Rory Cochrane: *CSI: Miami*) and Marie (Katee Sackhoff: *Battlestar Galactica*), for which Tim was accused and institutionalized, Kaylie remains obsessed with proving Tim not guilty, despite her brother just wanting to move on with his life.

The cause of their troubles is the Lasser Glass, an ornate mirror that Alan brought home shortly before his and Marie's deaths. During Tim's incarceration, Kaylie

uncovered the mirror's dark history, which includes the gruesome deaths of all those who have owned it over the past 300 years.

Upon Tim's release, she forces her reluctant sibling to return with her to their family home, where she's determined to destroy the mirror once and for all. Needless to say, the Lasser Glass is not

done with the Russell children, and the past and present start to collide in surreal and dreadful ways.

Oculus began life as *Oculus: Chapter 3 – The Man with the Plan*. Writer/director Mike Flanagan's 2006 short film depicts one character alone in a sealed room with the Lasser Glass, with horrible results. It played a number of film festivals and scooped up several awards. Flanagan says that the 32-minute short, which he co-wrote, directed and edited, was meant as a "calling card" to showcase both his talents and the strength of the *Oculus* idea, the hope always being that he would eventually get to make a feature-length version of it.

"The big theme that was always the engine for this thing was that no reflection is actually accurate," he says of the



connective tissue between the short and the feature during a sit-down interview the day after the film's world premiere at last September's Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). "They're all distorted in little imperceptible ways. All of our mental images of ourselves are not true – they're all backwards. But we accept them as reality. So that idea that what we accept as reality isn't true, and the actual reality could be the complete opposite of that."

In the years after the debut of the *Oculus* short, Salem, Massachusetts-native Flanagan, an editor by trade, who had previously directed three micro-budget, non-horror films that failed to find distribution, continued to work his Hollywood day job on TV shows such as *Hot in Cleveland* and *Design School*.

Then, in 2010, he and a few actor friends decided to make a scary movie. A successful Kickstarter campaign raised over US\$25,000 of the \$70,000 Flanagan and his producers would eventually spend on the creepy supernatural thriller *Absentia* (\$15,000 was the original goal.) Shot in just fifteen days, it depicts a pair of estranged sisters facing an ancient evil that carries away its victims (including *Hellboy*'s Doug Jones) into an unseen world via a shadowy passenger tunnel.

Flanagan toured *Absentia* around the film festival circuit, garnering many positive notices for its slow-burn atmosphere and the fact that it only hints at its creatures rather than showing them outright (a decision due in part to budgetary considerations). Again, he and his team won several awards. This time also garnering the attention of producers at Intrepid Pictures (*The Strangers*, *Doomsday*), who were willing to fund Flanagan's vision of an *Oculus* movie. Now he just needed a script.

"It was a real challenge because the short is just one guy alone in a room for 25 minutes," says Flanagan. "The big thing that broke the feature open for us was having two timelines to braid together. That just shot it out."

Indeed, much of the considerable tension *Oculus* generates comes not from violence or gore or jump scares but from the way the director, who also edited the film, plays with notions of what is real in the minds of Kaylie and Tim, and therefore in the minds of the audience. We seamlessly transition between the present day, as Kaylie and Tim experiment with the mirror in an attempt to destroy it, and memories of their childhoods, when their father went mad and turned on his wife. Or are these visions simply the manipulations of the Lasser Glass?

"I made a living for the last ten years editing, so that's kind of my first skill set," Flanagan says. "And what is great about that for me is that I can come into a script and then onto the set thinking about every edit. So most of our edits in this movie are written into the script, especially when it goes back and forth in time."

While *Oculus* spills blood and contains its fair

share of awful imagery (including Sackhoff with broken teeth), much of the film's power derives from the destruction of the Russell family as the Lasser Glass turns them against one another. For Flanagan, 35, a new father whose son was born just three months after *Absentia* finished shooting, the idea of the family destroyed both from the outside and within is scarier than any masked killer or giant monster.

"You look at *The Shining*, *The Exorcist* – that's exactly what it's about: it's a functional family unit that is besieged. I have a three-year-old son, and there is no fear quite like a parent's fear for the safety of their child. And until you know it first-hand it's impossible to understand."

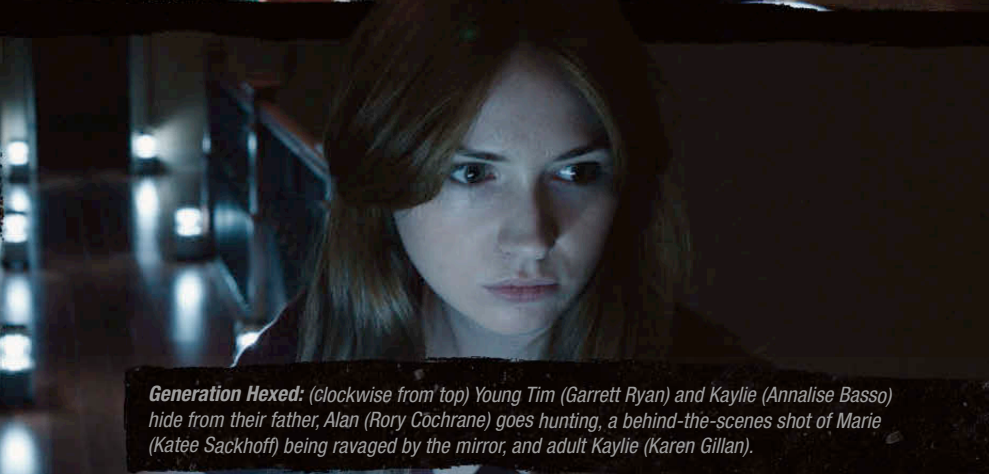
As for Gillan, who was coming off a successful run as Amy Pond on the BBC's madly popular

new incarnation of *Doctor Who*, her interest in the script came down to its treatment of the characters.

"We really get time to build the characters, and we become invested in them. We care about them. So that's how we end up feeling any sort of sadness," she says. "Because if we didn't really take the time to get to know and explore these people, we probably wouldn't feel anything, and it would become just another generic horror film, which is fun for the time, but disposable, really. This film is anything but that."

Similarly, Sackhoff was intrigued by the emotional depth of the script, which she devoured in half an hour. She and Flanagan were Skyping almost immediately, and she flew down to the Mobile, Alabama, set soon after.

"I really liked that stripping down of every-



Generation Hexed: (clockwise from top) Young Tim (Garrett Ryan) and Kaylie (Annalise Basso) hide from their father, Alan (Rory Cochrane) goes hunting, a behind-the-scenes shot of Marie (Katie Sackhoff) being ravaged by the mirror, and adult Kaylie (Karen Gillan).

thing that makes you a good mother and just that complete removal of love," she says of the horror faced by her character. "I just kept having to remind myself the entire time. I was, like, 'This is too far, this is too far. You don't love them right now. You're just trying to do the opposite of what you would normally do,' which is hard. Doing the opposite and still having love there is a hard thing to play because you're trying to give it just the right amount of crazy!"

That "crazy" included Sackhoff having to feign strangling Annalise Basso, the young actress who plays Kaylie as a child.

"We had safe words in place," she explains, "because we were strangling the shit out of children, and really going for it. And, granted, you're not closing down on them, but you're still holding on really tight, and that's scary for a twelve-year-old!"

Flanagan's next film (which also includes Sackhoff) saw him return to Mobile last November. *Somnia* co-stars Thomas Jane (*The Mist*) and Kate Bosworth (*Straw Dogs*) as a couple that adopts an abused orphan boy in the wake of their five-year-old son's drowning. The grieving parents are especially delighted by the new addition to their family when they discover his special ability: whatever he dreams manifests itself physically, including, after seeing his picture, their dead son.

"They can't help themselves," says Flanagan. "They want to recreate their dead child in the mind of this new one, so when he sleeps they can visit with him. It's like this gravity that they can't resist."

But the boy is increasingly reluctant to sleep because he knows what is coming: the boogeyman.

"He knows that sooner or later he's going to have this recurring nightmare that he [suffers from]. And when he dreams about his boogeyman, people die. It's so cool."

Flanagan says that all of his other movies have been building up to *Somnia*, which is currently scheduled for a 2015 release and was co-written by his *Oculus* screenwriting partner Jeff Howard.

"It's my favourite script," says Flanagan. "It is the most emotional movie I've ever got to work on. I think if we do it right, it's going to be that rare horror movie that makes people cry."

Flanagan is quickly proving himself adept at both coming up with highly original concepts and creating horror stories that are emotional powderkegs. Sackhoff says that she was not surprised by the standing ovation

that *Oculus* received during its TIFF premiere.

"It is an emotional, character-driven horror piece, and if they're expecting chainsaws at a gun fight, they're not going to get it," she says. "That's not what this movie is. It's a lot more supernatural and heartbreaking, and the audience, they got it, and all the press has seemed to get it, and the reviewers have seemed to get it. So it's nice when you do something slightly different and people seem to be open to it."

For his part, Flanagan – who plans to continue making horror films for the foreseeable future – says he will leave jump scares and cheap "boo" moments to other filmmakers. Instead, he will concentrate on creating his own brand of personal and emotional scare flicks.

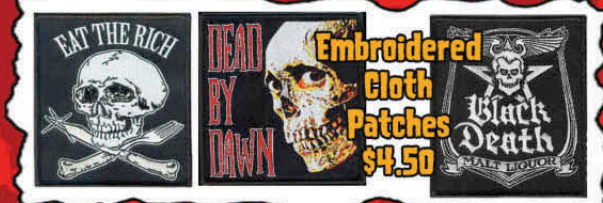
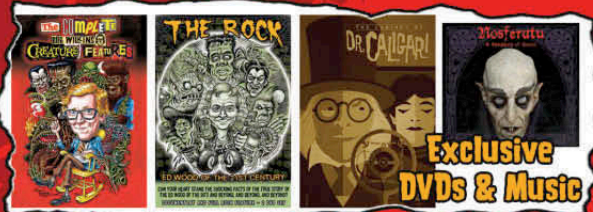
"I don't even think that's horror," he says of the typical, noisy spook-shows populating megaplexes. "It's like banging cymbals behind someone's head. You can startle anybody; anyone can do it. A loud noise does it; it's an involuntary reflex. To scare somebody, to really get into their head and disturb them, takes a lot of work." 🦋



ALL OF OUR MENTAL IMAGES
OF OURSELVES ARE NOT TRUE
- THEY'RE ALL BACKWARDS
- MIKE FLANAGAN

Through A Glass Darkly: (top to bottom) The infamous Lasser Glass, Kaylie and Tim (Brenton Thwaites) battle the mirror, and Marie's doppelgänger prepares to claim more victims.

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SKULL-LOVER JUSTIN KAMERER CAPTURES THE BEAUTY IN DECAY WITH HIS DEATHLY ELABORATE ILLUSTRATIONS



CALL IT A SKULL FETISH IF YOU WANT, BUT AMERICAN ARTIST JUSTIN KAMERER, BETTER KNOWN AS ANGRYBLUE, HAS TURNED HIS LOVE OF BARE CRANIUMS INTO A BURGEONING CAREER.

When the 33-year-old illustrator is not collecting the heads of dead things or perverting our childhood memories with twisted takes on beloved cartoon characters such as Bambi or Snow White, he creates Victorian-style ink illustrations of people, flowers and animals, which are so morbidly elaborate – many of them featuring the aforementioned skulls – that you almost expect to hear the buzzing of flies or catch a waft of decay. The Louisville, Kentucky, artist's style

has led to him being commissioned by bands such as The Rolling Stones, Nine Inch Nails and Green Day to create gig posters, merchandising designs and album art. He's also developed T-shirts for Fright Rags and Heartless. And, more recently, he was featured at the Mondo Gallery for their EC Comics exhibition. This month, Kameron lets us get a closer look inside *his* skull.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU GROWING UP?

I was an "inside kid," so I'm not sure when it started. I was always drawn to comic books. The villains were always my favourites. ... Maleficent [from Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*] is still one of my favourite villains. My mother was very supportive, but kept asking me why I didn't draw flowers. My father was one of those guys who could do anything. [He] was an engineer, so there were always

drafting tools around. I remember the first time I played with Photoshop and then when layers were brought in as an element; it was groundbreaking. I got introduced to a little bit of the design world just based on things that were around the house, and I kept going ever since.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FORMAL ART EDUCATION?

When I graduated [high school], I thought, "I can't make a living being an artist, so I'm going to learn design and then I'll figure out a way to be creative for a living." Years later, I started going to shows and got interested in drawing again. My background in design fuelled my overall sense of composition and has led to a lot of versatility I don't think I'd have if I just focused on illustration.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DRAWING MOST? LET ME GUESS, SKULLS, RIGHT?

Skull art seems to be my easy go-to. For a few years, it was mainly what I drew. Afterward, I wanted to figure out how to give some elegance to it, so I began learning how to draw birds, and then I decided I really needed to learn how to draw flowers – there you go, Mom – so I'd go to a florist, buy a bunch of them and make arrangements with various skulls I had at home for reference on projects. It made more sense to actually get some real ones, and figure it out, than to just draw what I thought they were supposed to look like. I love bringing a little bit of pretty, fantasy-feel into something that is normally macabre by itself. Insects are also a lot of fun because they're intricate and beautiful.

WHY SKULLS?

Because everyone has one. Everyone has drawn one. And there's always something you can do with it. For quite a while, I was doing skulls in a lot of music merchandising and that always went over well because who doesn't love a skull shirt? Honestly, they're fascinating shapes: the way they're layered, and have little ridges and pores. It's as interesting as drawing anything else, because at one time, a skull was this active functioning vessel; it's sculpted with each part having a specific, necessary function that is unconsciously used for its whole existence, until it's just not anymore.

DO YOU HAVE A COLLECTION OF SKULLS?

I have probably about 40 different skulls spread around the house. They're great reference.

THAT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE PREDATOR JEALOUS. ARE ANY OF THEM HUMAN?

I own one human skull, which is probably my favourite. I took it to a Ousch [T-shirt company] photo shoot and kept referring to it as Steven for some reason. When a model was holding it, [to shock her] I would yell, "Act like Steven just said something racist!"

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER THINGS THAT YOU DRAW INSPIRATION FROM?

I collect a lot of things and the house is covered in art, skulls, medical equipment, dental stuff, bisque doll heads. I try to keep a visual static in my periphery at all times. It keeps me in an almost constant state of brainstorming.

A GREAT DEAL OF YOUR ART COVERS DEATH AND DECAY. WHAT'S YOUR FASCINATION WITH THAT?

I like spooky stuff. ... It's always resonated with me. Probably thanks to *Grem-lins*, so let's blame part of it on Joe Dante. Another bit of the blame for my style might also be attributed to Robert Williams' album art from Gun N' Roses' *Appetite for Destruction*. However, of late, I've been trying to mix in some "pretty" elements to juxtapose the inherent dark nature, giving it a setting and possible story as opposed to, "Hey Ma! I dun draw'd skulls again!" 🦴



Cycle Of Life And Death: (clockwise from top) Justin Kameron with a few of his beloved skulls, Mother Earth, In Tongues, Faun and (opposite) Demon Hunter.



CINEMACAPSA

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FLUFFY SOMMERS

ODD THOMAS

Starring Anton Yelchin, Willem Dafoe and Addison Timlin
Written and directed by Stephen Sommers
Anchor Bay

The prospect of a new film from the director of *The Mummy Returns* and *Van Helsing* will hardly inspire nut-busting joy in most cinephiles. Neither will the knowledge that this latest offering from Stephen Sommers was delayed for almost a year due to legal disputes. The (maybe) good news is that, though *Odd Thomas* still exhibits the lapses and excesses present in his previous works, it does halt – or at the very least slow – the perceived downward trajectory of “the poor man’s Spielberg.”

Based on the best-selling novel by Dean Koontz, the eponymous Odd Thomas (Anton Yelchin) is a short-order cook who possesses an extraordinary gift: he can see the spirits of the dead. Odd uses this talent to avenge the deaths of the tormented revenants that frequently appear to him seeking justice, but keeps it a secret from everyone except his childhood sweetheart, Stormy (Addison Timlin, above), and the local police chief (Willem Dafoe).

Odd can also observe invisible apparitions known as Bodachs – frightful, sinewy creatures that relent-

lessly feed on human carnage and suffering. Their presence indicates imminent death, and so when Odd spies a horde of ‘em congregating around a suspicious-looking loner dubbed “Fungus Bob” (Shuler Hensley), he quickly realizes that his entire town is in mortal danger.

A slick amalgam of self-conscious comedy and innocuous horrors, *Odd Thomas* is a fairly faithful rendering of its darker source material. Indeed, Koontz has been unsparing in his praise of this adaptation, but the infusion of slow-mo action, faddish dialogue and cloying romance is cynically calculated to appeal to an undemanding popcorn audience. Even the menacing Bodachs – which resemble semi-translucent variants of the Xenomorphs in *Aliens* – are quickly neutered by Sommers’ customary over-reliance upon cartoony CGI.

Despite these misgivings, *Odd Thomas* is bolstered by an emotionally wrenching climax (which positions itself for a sequel that is unlikely to come) and Yelchin’s eminently likable performance (which perhaps deserves a better movie). To the actor’s credit, his ubiquitous and morbidly expositional voice-over – which holds the floundering narrative together – is not as grating as it might have been, and even succeeds admirably in making Sommers’ platitudes about love, fate, death and the afterlife seem moderately digestible.

MICHAEL DOYLE

FIRE IN THE HOLE

BAD MILO!

Starring Ken Marino, Gillian Jacobs and Peter Stormare
Directed by Jacob Vaughan
Written by Jacob Vaughan and Benjamin Hayes
Magnet

Pardon the pun – it’s irresistible – but writer/director Jacob Vaughan isn’t just blowing smoke up our butts when he asserts in the *Bad Milo!* press notes that his ass-demon film was influenced by *The Brood*. Similar to how Samantha Eggar’s Nola Carveth birthed children of rage in Cronenberg’s movie, this horror-comedy features a character whose stress manifests itself as a demon that hides where the sun don’t shine and who comes out whenever his owner (?) is anxious... and kills. Strangely, *Bad Milo!* shares something else with *The Brood*: insight into the anxieties of parenthood.

Ken Marino (TV’s *Party Down*) plays Duncan, a mid-level executive who does not cope well with stress, of which he has a lot. His wife Sarah (Gillian Jacobs: TV’s *Community*) wants a baby, his crooked boss (Patrick Warburton: *Tea*) forces him to fire several of his co-workers, and he has severe daddy issues, which come out during therapy sessions with Dr. Highsmith (Peter Stormare: *Constantine*). What also comes out during those sessions – through Duncan’s



ass, that is – is Milo, a fanged, glistening demon capable of doing what Duncan might want to but cannot: kill those responsible for stressing him out. Including, if Milo has its way, Sarah.

The cast's commitment sells the absurdity of the concept, with Marino being the most impressive. He makes Duncan not just a figure to laugh at but to maybe cry for as we see how his irresponsible father (Stephen Root: *Office Space*) messed him up as a child, instilling in his son a deep-seated fear of fatherhood.

The Milo monster, meanwhile, is genius. Director Vaughan has eschewed CGI, going the practical route to give us a no-budget creature that can be as tender as a puppy or as terrifying as a rabid dog. He is also fun as hell to watch, and Vaughan isn't shy about showing us the carnage those little fangs can inflict. The director manages the tone well, giving us big laughs, appropriate gross-outs, and even empathy for Duncan's plight. After all, sometimes we could all use a Bad Milo.

SEAN PLUMMER

THEY SELL THE DEAD

REEL ZOMBIES

Starring David J. Francis, Mike Masters and Stephen Papadimitriou
Directed by David J. Francis and Mike Masters
Written by Mike Masters
Synopsis

Another day, another zombie movie. Since *Night of the Living Dead*, so many zombie films have stuck with the usual formula: follow a group of plucky survivors holed up in a base under siege. *Reel Zombies*, to its credit, isn't about a ragtag group of deader fodder, but rather a ragtag group of filmmakers trying to exploit the undead for their own ends.

David Francis and Mike Masters (the men behind *Zombie Night* and its sequel, *Awakening*) play themselves in this mockumentary about the filming of a third *Zombie Night* movie. Production on *Reel Zombies*' film-within-a-film would go smoothly were it not for one small problem: there's been a zombie outbreak in the real world. In a marriage of verisimilitude and cost-cutting, Francis and Masters opt to use real zombies in their film. What could possibly go wrong?

Set your expectations low and you'll find this horror-comedy not without its charms. The premise is clever, if underdeveloped. There are even some good gags here and there, such as the burly zombie wrangler whose microphone is always clipped to his Santa-like beard, a zombie devouring a crew member's iPod and the film's frequent "in memoriam" dedications when the undead start munching on the actors. Best of all is an enjoyably silly cameo from Lloyd Kaufman hamming it up during an audition for Francis and Masters. True to form, the Troma founder manages to shamelessly promote *Poultrygeist* in his precious few minutes of screen time.

The overall lack of truly inspired material suggests, however, *Reel Zombies* was better off as a short special feature on one of the *Zombie Night* DVDs, instead



Big Ass Spider

of a full-length film. The boring extras reflect this paucity of imagination, sporting a dry commentary and many cut scenes. The deleted material is mostly disposable, save for a welcome second appearance from Kaufman.

ADAM CLARKE

ARACHNID VS. LOS ANGELES

BIG ASS SPIDER

Starring Greg Grunberg, Lombardo Boyar and Ray Wise
Directed by Mike Mendez
Written by Gregory Gieras
Epic Pictures

Just in case the title alone isn't enough of a give-away for you, *Big Ass Spider* is about a genetically modified arachnid that has the ability to grow to monstrous proportions in a matter of hours. Like most military experiments gone awry, it's never fully explained why or how such a creature came into being, but regardless, it's up to blue-collar exterminator Alex Mathis (Greg Grunberg) to stop it. While at a hospital receiving treatment for a mundane spider bite, he meets up with security guard Jose Ramos (Lombardo Boyar), who agrees to help him track and destroy the eight-legged monstrosity.

Over the past few years there's been a renaissance of 1950s-style giant monster movies, but *Big Ass Spider* stands out in the oversaturated genre for a number of reasons. Rather than relying solely on its big-ass, kick-ass monster, it also has plenty of entertaining characters and witty dialogue. The pacing is also spot on for this sort of movie, as we quickly learn the set-up before diving straight into the action. There's rarely a missed opportunity for a joke, and while Jose's Latino quips get laid on pretty thick at times, the rest of the humor is spot-on.

Apart from a few jump scares, the horror takes a back seat to the action and comedy here, and the gore factor is certainly toned down for what you might expect from a film about a man-eating spider. However, there's still plenty of monster mayhem to be had as the beast crawls through downtown Los Angeles, including a particularly brutal rampage through a city park.

It's rare that a film can be completely summed up by the three words that comprise its title, and it's even

rarer that such a film is worth watching. It may not push the envelope, but it doesn't have to. Monster fans and anyone who enjoys a fun, fast-paced movie need not think twice about giving this one a watch. Arachnophobes, on the other hand, need not apply.

MIKE BEARDSALL

THREE'S COMPANY

SCORNE

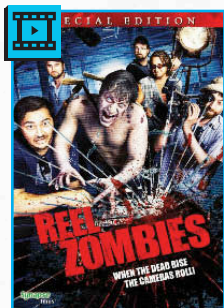
Starring AnnaLynne McCord, Viva Bianca and Billy Zane
Directed by Mark Jones
Written by Mark Jones and Sadie Katz
Anchor Bay

Experienced schlock viewers will recognize *Scorned* director Mark Jones as the writer and director of *Leprechaun*, the unforgettably bad Warwick Davis vehicle. This effort features several recurring motifs from Jones' work, such as a killer who cracks bad jokes, groan-inducing murders and a flat visual style that screams, "I have no imagination!"

The film stars AnnaLynne McCord (who made a small splash recently with the indie body horror film *Incision*) and Billy Zane as Sadie and Kevin, a long-time couple with drastically different views on their relationship. Sadie's convinced that her latest trip to their beach house will prompt Kevin to propose to her. Kevin, on the other hand, is hoping to dump Sadie after years of stringing her along while he secretly fools around with her best friend, Jen (Viva Bianca). Sadie gets wise to their affair when she peeks at Kevin's text message history, and within minutes, she has both Kevin and Jen tied up and proceeds to torture them with an assortment of instruments, including a vice and scissors, and live electrical current.

Best described as a dumb thriller that never knows what it wants to be, *Scorned* plays it straightforward in the first half, only to crank up the black humor and wisecracks from Sadie in the second. The second act also introduces a "killer on the loose" subplot that ties into the main story under painfully contrived circumstances.

The film is largely a three-person show and, with the exception of Bianca, struggles under a weight that just can't be supported by its cast. Zane delivers a performance that feels bored and lazy, on par with the later work of Val Kilmer. (Sporting a bald head and a few extra pounds, he looks like Lex Luthor after a pie-





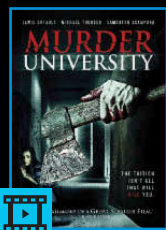
OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE DODGES DETENTION

BEHEAD OF THE CLASS

MURDER UNIVERSITY

Wild Eye Releasing



How long has it been since I attended university? Hint: Reagan was in the White House and Googling somebody had a whole different meaning. But at least I didn't have to worry about getting my head cut off by a cult of killers wearing devil masks. Not so with Josh, the hero of *Murder University*, who's attending a college where the students are dropping like flies in a rash of unexplained murders.

Having survived an attempt on his life by the aforementioned masked kooks, he teams up with a detective and his hot daughter in order to stop the killers. It's a playful throwback to '80s slasher films and features some decent acting, lots of sex and enough decapitations to make a great drinking game!

BODY COUNT: 29

FINAL GRADE: B+ for brutal beheadings, boobs and buckets of blood

MAKING THE BLADE

UNSOLVED

Lost Empire Films



I always felt sorry for those students who stayed home and studied all night, while I was out doing keg stands and damage to my GPA. Then again, I ended up writing for *Rue Morgue* while they're all lawyers and doctors now... Amanda is definitely one of those keeners who takes her education seriously. Enrolled in a criminology course, she uncovers an unsolved campus murder and decides to investigate it without realizing that she's digging up too many ghosts from the past. I really wanted to like *Unsolved* but it continually falls flat with its lack-lustre kills, plodding storyline and an ending that's so lame you just might want to skip it altogether and get back to cramming for that big exam instead.

BODY COUNT: 8

FINAL GRADE: D- for dull, drab and dreary

HARD KNOCKS HIGH

KILLING TWICE: A DEADHUNTER CHRONICLE

Troma Entertainment



I didn't take any Spanish courses, but I drank enough Jell-o shooters at Señor Frogs in Cabo San Lucas during Spring Break to get by (that counts, right?). I mention it because this is a Spanish flick that Lloyd Kaufman and the Troma Team dredged up – probably while on a bender in Barcelona. It's actually the third film in a series about zombie killers called Deadhunters, who are called upon to kill some kind of Biblical creature that's stalking a local high school.

If that premise wasn't dumb enough, once inside the school, they encounter four girls holding a séance, a group of intrepid reporters, some government agents who want to kill them, a bishop and a monster that's about as threatening as a cinnamon churro. Waitress, another round of shooters, *por favor!*

BODY COUNT: 10

FINAL GRADE: Rated F for "forget this film and go to Señor Frogs."

LAST CHANCE LANCE

eating contest.) As the titular scorned lover, McCord spends the film's entire running time with her eyes bugged out – a feat she can't seem to pull off convincingly.

With its lack of tension, terrible acting and remarkably off-putting attempt to use bipolar disorder as an explanation for its villain's actions, *Scorned* proves that it's possible for the writer/director of *Leprechaun* to make an even worse film.



ADAM CLARKE

THE DOORS OF RECEPTION

BANSHEE CHAPTER

Starring Katia Winter, Ted Levine and Michael McMillian

Written and directed by Blair Erickson

ANConnect

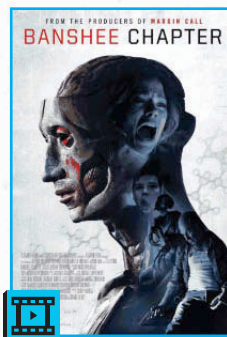
Writer/director Blair Erickson blends fact and fiction to disturbing effect in *Banshee Chapter*, a micro-budget horror film with big ideas and bigger scares. *Dexter*'s Katia Winter stars as Anne Roland, a journalist investigating the disappearance of her college friend (and possible love interest) James (Michael McMillian: *True Blood*), who was researching Project MKUltra, a real-life CIA operation that involved the often illegal drugging of American (and some Canadian) citizens from the 1950s through to the early '70s. James had stumbled upon one of the key drugs used in MKUltra, DMT-19, a powerful hallucinogen that appears to open a doorway to a dimension populated by something not of this world.

Anne's searches lead her to Thomas Blackburn (Ted Levine: *Silence of the Lambs*), a Hunter S. Thompson-style cultural provocateur who supplied James with the drug. She soon finds herself pursued by the same forces that took James, leading to a discovery that combines science and secret knowledge to terrifying effect.

As Blackburn, Levine has fun channelling both Thompson, as well as Merry Prankster Ken Kesey, the *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* author who volunteered for the MKUltra experiments as a university student. Winter, meanwhile, crafts a convincing portrait of a tough journalist whose desire to uncover what happened to her friend is driven by both regret and professional curiosity.

First-timer Erickson has devised a creepy debut, leveraging documented phenomenon (MKUltra, numbers stations), conspiracy theories and newsreel footage to add dramatic heft to his script, which revolves around an intriguing idea: that drugs not only open the doors of perception to us but that something might just come through from the other side.

Banshee Chapter's tiny budget means that the film's demonic antagonists are only glimpsed in shadow or caught briefly on grainy videotape, with only the occasional flourish of gore. But the teasing nature of the film's more horrific images is appropriate. This is a movie whose scares mainly play out in Anne's mind and in ours – much like the drugs that open the doors for the monsters to come through in the first place.



SEAN PLUMMER

THE GORIEST NEW FILMS ON THE BIG SCREEN BELONG TO THE ACTION GENRE. HERE'S HOW TWO OF THE BLOODIEST STACK UP IN A...



GORE SEQUEL SHOWDOWN

THE RAID: BERANDAL VS 300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE

by DAVE ALEXANDER

BLOOD AND BRUTALITY ON THE BIG SCREEN DOESN'T NECESSARILY BELONG TO THE HORROR GENRE THESE DAYS, AS TWO NEW ACTION MOVIE SEQUELS DEMONSTRATE WITH FOUNTAINS OF SPLATTER.

The first, Warner Brothers' *300: Rise of an Empire* – directed by Noam Murro and co-written by *300* (2006) director Zack Snyder – is technically not a sequel as it takes place in ancient Greece around the same time as the events in the previous film. This go around, instead of Spartans, we follow Athenian general Themistocles (Sullivan Stapleton) as he leads a severely overmatched naval fleet to try to drive back the invading Persian armada, led by Artemisia (Eva Green), who's as skilled in battle as she is at scheming. On behalf of the hilariously adorned, pretty Persian king, Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro), she rains hell down on the Greeks with arrows, flames and wave after wave of high seas swordsmen. While the plot is driven by some of Themistocles' clever military maneuvering, it's mostly one big hack 'n' slash 'n' stab 'n' slice-into-pieces battle.

The Raid 2: Berandal is a world and time apart, as the E1 release takes us to

modern-day Indonesia, for a gangster gore epic written and directed by Gareth Edwards, who also brought us *The Raid* in 2012. Much more expansive and intricately plotted than its prequel, we rejoin cop hero Rama (Iko Uwais) as he's still reeling from barely escaping a high-rise full of gangsters in *The Raid*. Seems those guys were small potatoes and now the only way to protect his family is to go deep undercover to infiltrate the Jakarta mafia. He befriends the head gangster's son, Uco (Arifin Putra), in prison, which allows for an epic bathroom stall fight, and a literally down 'n' dirty brawl in the prison yard. Once out, he's muscle for his new employers, but Uco has designs to dethrone his father and take over the business. Inevitably, this leads to all-out war, where the stunt-filled battles are chock full of broken bones, lacerated limbs and gunshot grue.

Us horror fans have to wonder just where that increasingly blurry line is between gore movie and action film. The colour of the blood? The absence of actual entrails? The length of the shots? Or is it just a lack of a "horror" label that allows these movies to get away with more? While you ponder that, dear reader, we've stacked these sequels against each other to see how they appeal to gore fans.

BODY COUNT:

300 2 – Thousands.

Raid 2 – Scores.

POINT: 300 2

WEAPONRY:

300 2 – Mostly swords, some fiery explosives and some shield bashing.

Raid 2 – Fists, feet, elbows, knees and heads never stop harming, but knives, machetes, pistols, a shotgun, cars, a mop handle, a baseball, a hot grill and, most notably, a couple of hammers inflict incredible damage.

POINT: Raid 2

BLOOD:

300 2 – There's no way this could get in theatres if the mayhem wasn't cartoonish, and the CGI blood erupts in purplish globs, as if these mighty

warriors had cherry jelly in their veins. But damn, does it ever look great in 3-D, flying off the screen.

Raid 2 – More red and realistic, it flows and flies with the wild abandon of practical and digital gore mixed together. Nastier and drippier, sometimes it just paints the walls.

POINT: 300 2 (for the 3-D)

CREATIVE KILLS:

300 2 – Head stomped by a horse's hoof, close up of a floating head with massive burn damage, head cleaved by a shield and – seemingly a nod to Monty Python's *The Black Knight* – an enemy soldier has his limbs cut off one at a time before taking a blade to the melon.

Raid 2 – This one's more about knock-down, drag-out martial arts brutality, punctuated by a face burned to goo on a griddle, gangsters gleefully gutted in a subway car by a two-hammer-wielding

woman, and a shocking point-blank shotgun blast to the head that the film doesn't cut away from.

POINT: Raid 2

EFFECTIVENESS:

300 2 – The relentless bloodletting is exciting, but without much plot and with plenty of repetition, it becomes a bit tedious.

Raid 2 – At 148 minutes, this one has plenty of story but some confusing plot points and unnecessary subplots. Yet, just as tedium starts to set in, it wows us with another outrageous bloodbath.

POINT: Raid 2

WINNER: RAID 2, BY A HAMMER CONTUSION.

REISSUES



THE DARKEST KNIGHT RETURNS

DARKMAN (1990) Blu-ray

Starring Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand and Larry Drake

Directed by Sam Raimi

Written by Sam Raimi, Ivan Raimi, Chuck Pfarrer, et al.
Scream Factory

Although an unrepentant fan of *Darkman* since its release, I don't have much of a bone to pick with its detractors. Indeed, it's easy to dismiss it as "lesser Raimi" or as derivatively pulpy... it's just that, oddly, those are also some of its strengths. That's because, with this film, one senses Raimi distilling not only every dark comic book and misunderstood monster trope that ever inspired him, but also feverishly remixing them into an artful original. The point of intersection: revenge.

After all, that's what drives Batman, a figure referenced in *Darkman's* gargoyle/rooftop imagery and, more obliquely, Spider-Man, a character with whom Raimi will always be associated. But there's also Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, a crime fighter thought to be dead like *Darkman's* title character, and a comic character

whose noirish kineticism is evident throughout this overachieving B-movie.

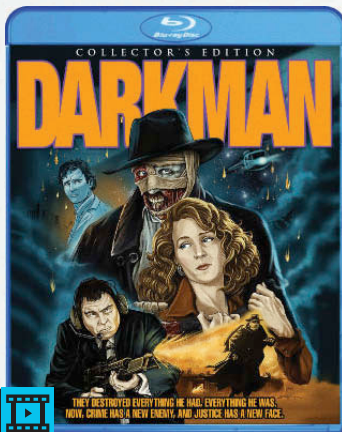
The plot: Peyton Westlake (Liam Neeson) is targeted by the cruel Robert G. Durant (Larry Drake), who's after an incriminating document belonging to Westlake's girlfriend (Frances McDormand). Miraculously left alive but hideously disfigured and now impervious to pain, Westlake uses his ability to grow facial skin in any likeness to dismantle Durant's gang one by one.

But is this really horror? Well, with *Darkman's* *Phantom-of-the-Opera*-meets-a-mad-scientist

premise, its protagonist sporting *Mummy*-style bandages (discussed by Neeson in an interview done just for this disc), and its uncompromising bleakness, there can be little doubt. If that weren't enough, the uncanny vibe is strong in several scenes in which Westlake poses as a foe's doppelgänger. Oh, and did I mention that the central conceit – our anti-hero can't spend much time in the light – is the perfect

metaphor for any horror creator... or fan?

Capturing all the pre-CGI glory – practical effects and old-style optical composites – the Collector's Edition Blu-ray is a joy. Sure, in Danny Elfman's



sweeping score you can hear everything else he's ever done, especially *The Simpsons* and Tim Burton's flicks, but that's just another reason to crank the volume. The copious bonus features, which we've grown to expect from Scream Factory, are particularly generous here. In short, this is the perfect way to discover, or revisit, an unsung classic made before its leads and director became above-the-title names.

PETER GUTIERREZ

NOT-SO-SWEET YOUNG THINGS

BRUTALIZATION (1973) DVD

Starring Bryan Marshall, Alexandra Stewart and Sylvia Kristel

Directed by Fons Rademakers

Written by Fons Rademakers and Hugo Claus
One 7 Movies

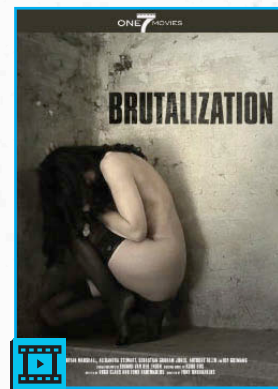
A psychotic gang of hedonists called The Ravens get their kicks by mutilating cats and frolicking with saucy babes in orgiastic sex frenzies. No, it's not Last Chance Lance's house on a Friday night. It's a curious Dutch/Belgium co-production from the '70s that's far more thoughtful than its dodgy North American DVD cover suggests.

In a somewhat familiar *Clockwork Orange*-type scenario, a pack of overprivileged youngsters hell-bent on decimating Dutch society burst into the home of a middle-aged couple, smash the place to bits, then gang-rape the wife and force her husband to watch. It's a poor man's riff on the Kubrick classic but one that nevertheless boasts a few merits of its own.

British character actor Bryan Marshall (*Quatermass and the Pit*) heads up a colourful international cast as the randy Inspector van der Valk, who sets out to take down the gang. When he's not hot on the heels of the Ravens, he's drinking pints, smoking fags and writhing in adulterous bliss with beautiful blonde escort Feodora (Montreal sex kitten Alexandra Stewart).

Then there's the rest of the girls – veritable swarms of nubile young vixens (including a very radiant, pre-*Emmanuelle* Sylvia Kristel) who, when they're not splashing about naked in the sea, can be found splashing about naked in the blood of sacrificed felines.

Such gleeful insanity stands in marked contrast to the dreary North American DVD cover art, which promises little more than blunt degradation. A young woman, naked except for stockings, cowers in a darkened corner awaiting some hideous sexual torment. Not only is there no such character to be found within, but it's a complete



misrepresentation of the tone of a film. Thankfully, *Brutalization* does have a better title! It was originally released as *Because of the Cats*, the name derived from the novel by Nicolas Freeling.

Beyond the effusion of moistened bints and decapitated kittens, *Brutalization* is a philosophical (if reactionary) meditation on the battleground of the generation gap, where the old resent the young for their beauty and convictions and the young view the ideological failures of the establishment with seething contempt. As the Ravens charismatic captain declares to his glassy-eyed droogs, "All governments are corrupt. Is there a more grotesque joke than democracy or a more absurd delusion than communism? The only way to achieve personal freedom is to be free." It's a liberty that apparently does not apply to either housewives or housecats.

STUART F. ANDREWS

ANIMAL INSTINCTS

CAT PEOPLE (1982) Blu-ray

Starring Nastassja Kinski, Malcolm McDowell and John Heard
Directed by Paul Schrader
Written by Alan Ormsby
Scream Factory

For better or worse, Universal Studios entered the '80s with remakes of their classic horror films. The idea fizzled when their first efforts, *The Thing* and *Cat People*, died at the box office. Pilloried by critics upon release, John Carpenter's gory update of 1951's *The Thing from Another World* is now widely considered a modern horror classic, but *Cat People* remains less acclaimed, although the Scream Factory Collector's Edition Blu-ray begs for a reappraisal of this odd, erotic film.

The new *Cat People* was inspired by director Jacques Tourneur's noirish 1942 film of the same name about a young woman (played by Simone Simon) who transforms into a werecat when aroused. Director Paul Schrader (*American Gigolo*) significantly rewrote the script by Alan Ormsby (*Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things*), putting his own psychosexual stamp on it. But American audiences largely rejected its bold sexuality and fantastical horror.

Nastassja Kinski (*To the Devil a Daughter*) plays Irena, an orphan who travels to New Orleans to be reunited with her brother Paul (Malcolm McDowell). He reveals a terrible secret: they come from a long line of shapeshifters who can only have sex with each other, otherwise they transform into leopards that kill their lovers. This, needless to say, complicates Irena's budding relationship with zoo curator Oliver (John Heard).

Scream Factory bests Universal's 2004 barebones DVD by delivering a crop of new interviews, some more interesting than others. The studio scores all the main talents—including Kinski, McDowell, Heard, Schrader and composer



Cat People

Giorgio Moroder, who discusses working with David Bowie on the title song, "Cat People (Putting Out Fire)." The cast reminiscences are mostly generic, with the biggest revelation being that the leopards in the film were actually cougars painted black. The Schrader interview is more informative, with him discussing his uncredited script rewrites (including changing Ormsby's ending) and why he thinks the film did poorly in America (blame the country's puritanism). Nevertheless, the lack of a director commentary track is keenly felt.

Sexy and visually vibrant, *Cat People*, like Carpenter's *The Thing*, is that rare remake that successfully updates its source material for a modern age.

SEAN PLUMMER



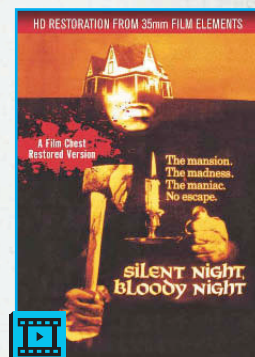
Christmas, it was plagued by problems, including the death of Patterson in '72.) It's a bleak proto-slasher with giallo trappings that's unpredictable enough to still be enjoyed now, long after the slasher formula has been milked to death. Anybody's fair game to bite the dust in this movie and the film's shocks pack a vivid punch. Most notable is a tense, black-and-white flashback sequence reminiscent of the better silent horror films. That set piece could've been a short film on its

own and it's a shame director Theodore Gershuny didn't film more sequences that way, given his flair for monochrome.

Film Chest's release of this overlooked title offers what might be the best presentation it has ever received on home video, succeeding where past DVD releases have failed. Previous reissues appeared to be VHS transfers, which offered a muddy image that was nigh-unwatchable during the night scenes. A recent Code Red release cleaned up the picture, but appeared to have gone overboard in the remastering process by giving it a garish Technicolor appearance at odds with its sombre mood. This Film Chest release, while noticeably cleaned up, sports muted colours more befitting the film. The only disappointing aspect is that it has no special features.

While some of *Silent Night, Bloody Night's* power may be a happy accident caused by the movie's low budget and chintzy film stock, it's still a solid little horror movie whose atmosphere more than makes up for its uneven cast.

ADAM CLARKE



AXE'ING NOSTALGIC

SILENT NIGHT, BLOODY NIGHT (1972) DVD

Starring Patrick O'Neal, Mary Woronov and John Carradine
Directed by Theodore Gershuny
Written by Theodore Gershuny, Ira Teller and Jeffrey Konvitz
Film Chest

Butler House is an abandoned property plagued by a dark past... and that was *before* it was briefly and unsuccessfully converted into an asylum! Jeffrey Butler (James Patterson), heir of the Butler House, is trying to palm off the property. His arrival on his grandfather's old stomping grounds coincides with a black-gloved maniac making raspy phone calls to various townsfolk, including Diane (cult icon Mary Woronov). And then locals start dying, leaving the audience to figure out the true identity of the killer.

Silent Night, Bloody Night is the other, lesser-known horror movie with a killer who taunts his victims by phone that was released in 1974. (Though completed two years prior to *Black*

THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE

Ape Shall Not Kill Robot Ape

by Paul Corupe

You know about spooky 1967 stop-motion classic *Mad Monster Party*, but animation specialists Rankin-Bass just might have made a bigger, more primitive footprint on the horror genre with their live-action *kaiju* romp *King Kong Escapes*. Released the same year as their tribute to classic horror, this lesser-known work of giant monster madness was the company's first and only co-production with Toho, home to Godzilla, Mothra and numerous other giant creatures. The result is a kid-friendly mix of spies and smashed cityscapes that reveals how the Japanese were able to retrofit cinema's original 900 lb ape to match their usual *kaiju* sensibilities. Debuting on Blu-ray this month, *King Kong Escapes* is surprisingly engaging – a well-balanced effort that incorporates its monster action fairly seamlessly into a thriller about attempts to control a powerful supply of nuclear energy. Okay, Shakespeare it ain't, but it's far more interesting than Toho's other giant monster offering from that year, the supremely silly *Son of Godzilla*.

Directed by *kaiju* veteran Ishirō Honda, the film takes most of its narrative cues from Rankin-Bass' own *The King Kong Show* (1966), a cheapjack Saturday morning cartoon in which a young boy befriends the beast and together they battle the creations of mad scientist (but not British time lord) Dr. Who. This Dr. Who is a debonair caped supervillain (Eisei Amamoto), who's off scouring the North Pole for the rare Element X along with the sultry Madame X (Mie Hama), whose foreign nation is bankrolling him. Instead of, say, purchasing reliable mining equipment, Dr. Who decides to create an experimental giant robot replica of the world's most fearsome gorilla, King Kong. But Mechani-Kong is only able to smash through a few layers of ice before his circuits are fried by Element X's radioactive emissions.

As for the real Kong, he's currently kicking back on Mondo Island doing the usual: wrestling dinos, scaring the natives and falling for ladies, such as nuclear sub nurse Susan Watson (Linda Miller),



who's visiting along with Commander Nelson (Rhodes Reason) and first officer Nomura (Akira Takarada). Intent on recruiting Kong in his power grab, Dr. Who arrives and gas-bombs the beast into submission, flying him back to his secret arctic lair and eventually using Susan as incentive to force him into hard labour. But everybody with even a rudimentary understanding of cartoons or Japanese monster movies knows where this one's going: Kong slips out of Dr. Who's clutches and faces off against Mechani-Kong atop Tokyo Tower.

Maybe appropriately, Kong's suit design (by Tsuburaya Eija) is crudely cartoonish compared to his appearance in *King Kong vs Godzilla* (1963), with a face that resembles mushed plasticine, includ-

ing heavy, drooping eyelids – oddly reminiscent of Bumble, the yeti creature from Rankin-Bass' own *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. But the obviously James Bond-inspired story adds a bit of adult flavour, and *King Kong Escapes* bucks the then-trend of increasingly pandering, child-geared *kaiju*. There are no annoying kids in short pants underfoot, and Madame X's infiltration of a UN press conference to learn Kong's whereabouts (plus her attempted seduction of Commander Nel-

son) hints at actual Cold War politics. Mechani-Kong, too, is more spy gadget than ape, packing a grenade belt and laser eyes, as well as a hypnotic light on its head.

But more interesting is the way Kong is reinterpreted to fit into Toho's established world of giant monsters. In the original classic, he represented the dangerous and unpredictable foreign "other," a natural, brutal force almost beyond the control of Western society. But just as Godzilla was awoken via ill-advised nuclear experimentation (a direct callback to the horrors of the Hiroshima bombing), Kong's world is an atomic accident waiting to happen. Aside from the nuclear subs, radioactive isotopes and Madame X's hopes to steal Element X to create atomic weapons, Mechani-Kong himself is essentially a walking nuclear reactor, the living embodiment of destructive atomic power that Kong must stop.

It's a message that would have resonated more deeply for Japanese audiences, but Western viewers will still find much to enjoy, as the film is paced like a whiz-bang 1940s serial, with spectacular monster battle set pieces. While the Saturday morning cartoon influence is obvious, the way *King Kong Escapes* ransacks elements of the 1933 classic and appeals to more adult sensibilities make it a *kaiju* semi-classic that's often more fun than a barrel of radioactive monkey robots. 🐼





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CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT

R



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

Trouble in Trollenburg by John W. Bowen

Ever wake up at night fretting about big, pressing issues that could alter your life or even change the course of human history? Generally speaking, I don't. But one night last week, I sat bolt upright in bed in the grip of a Category 3 anxiety attack, sweating, gasping for breath and soiling my vintage *Scooby-Doo* jammies (which, frankly, had long since seen better days anyway), all due to the sudden realization that I'd never seen *The Crawling Eye*. Admittedly, the 1958 film's alternate title, *The Trollenburg Terror*, has a nice Lovecraftian ring to it, but dude, *The Crawling Eye* practically defies genre-fan resistance. And the storyline, as I soon found out, kind of defies viewer expectations in general.

Trollenburg is a touristy little resort town somewhere high in the Swiss Alps, but its picayune charms have been harshed as of late by a rash of mountain-climber decapitations, which appear to have been committed by something lurking in a cloud that hovers over the mountain-side, seemingly moving about with a will of its own. Before you can say, "Call in the eggheads!" the eggheads get called in, including token American Alan Brooks (Forrest Tucker) and a couple of psychic sisters (Jennifer Jayne and Janet Munro). But every answer that's turned up simply raises more questions. The cloud is radioactive, but why the decapitations? How is it able to manipulate locals into turning against each other, often with fatal consequences? And why haven't we actu-



ally seen the titular critter by the time we're a half-hour in?

Well, back to the lab we go for more theorizing. Expeditions are launched, more people get offed and the ones who return are often traumatized to the point of incoherence. (No matter how shook up folks get, the cure always seems to be a belt of booze and a smoke – ah, simpler times, how I miss you.) Oh, and still no crawling eye action onscreen at this point, but it's hard not to get swept along.

With a script by genre king Jimmy Sangster (too many Hammer titles to list here), *The Crawling Eye* owes a bit to Lovecraft and a bit

flaws, this thing has a strange charm all its own.

But here's the weird part. Well, yet another weird part. Prior to viewing *The Crawling Eye*, I had this vague recollection of editor-in-chief Dave Alexander saying he was a fan, and sure enough, when I told him I was interested in covering it, he jumped up and down, clapping his hands and giggling with girlish glee. (And if you've never seen a guy who looks like an NHL enforcer jump up and down while clapping his hands and giggling with girlish glee, well, uh... I guess you haven't.) [Note: For the record, Dave was actually jumping up and down and clapping his hands like a well-rounded, reasonably normal, full-grown man. – Ed.] Thing is, Dave gets very impatient – worse than me, even – when a film promises you some gnarly-ass monster but refuses to deliver on the goods. I pondered this with increasing intensity as *The Crawling Eye*'s 78-minute runtime continued to tick by with no big reveal until just past the 61-minute mark, when bulbous, steaming orbs do their best to pry victims out of a mountain-top observatory with their rubbery tentacles. Dunno – he's a complex man. Ask him yourself, at your own risk. Meanwhile, better get the hell out of my basement soon, 'cause right about now there's a strange cloud moving in overtop of me, and you don't want to see how I get after 61 minutes or so. 🐛



more to the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (which had been a huge hit just two years earlier), and yet despite its talkiness and pacing

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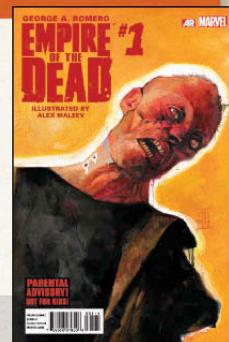
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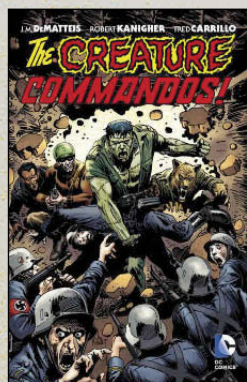
Guest line up is subject to change.



If you've been waiting for a new George A. Romero zombie story, behold: *Empire of the Dead*. Years after the initial outbreak, the remaining citizens of New York attempt to carry on as a society while learning to avoid the zombies still walking the streets. Romero is clearly eager to build on the mythology established in the films, rather than simply rehash. And so we see the ongoing evolution of the zombie as select humans continue to show an interest in what makes them tick and the possibility of rehabilitation. Likewise, rather than comprising a ragtag groups of survivors, this collective functions as a civilization, albeit one resembling an ancient feudal system, complete with zombie blood sports. These elements alone are reason enough to enjoy the series, but throw in some great art (just look at that cover by Arthur Suydam of *Marvel Zombies* fame), a nice call-back to the original *Night of the Living Dead* and a curveball ending that promises to radically change the stakes of the Deadverse (think fangs...) and you have a surprisingly strong book.



I missed out on the *The Creature Commandos*! original run back in the day so this collection, gathering the full series, has been a great opportunity to catch up. It's a fairly simple premise:

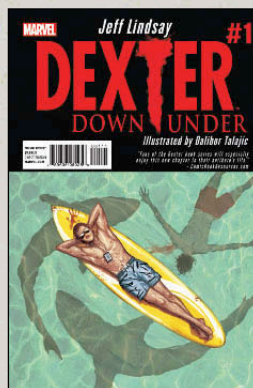


experiments by the US military during World War II lead to the creation of a rather unorthodox group of soldiers: a vampire, a werewolf, a Frankenstein creature and a gorgon. Led by the human Shrieve – whose repulsive personality makes him

more of a monster than his compatriots – the Commandos (along with the occasional help from GI Robot) do battle with dinosaurs, aliens, robots, killer children and, of course, Nazis. While the stories are somewhat simplistic, even for the time, the brisk pace of the tales, the uniqueness of the concept and the appeal of the characters more than make up for the lack of depth. Doesn't hurt either that there are some great visuals by classic artists such as Pat Broderick, Fred Carrillo and Dan Spiegle. A series well worth (re)discovering.

Dexter may be done on television but he's back in comic books for his second miniseries, the five-issue *Dexter Down Under*. Someone is brutally killing Asian immigrants in Canberra, Australia, and the local police decide to call in blood forensics expert Dexter Morgan, unaware of his additional expertise in serial killers, of

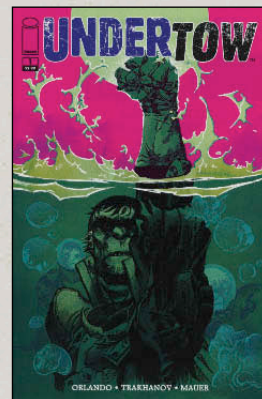
course. While Dexter gets used to the different customs, a list of suspects begins to form. It's nice to see the character away from his usual Miami hunting grounds; the change of locale gives the story a fresh perspective. The typical fish-out-of-water hijinks mesh nicely with the grislier narrative at large and the first issue hints at a broader and more involving mystery. Dalibor Talajic does a nice job with the art, conveying the change of scenery credibly, allowing Australia a chance to shine amidst the gore.



Sebastian Fiumara. Another reason for my Lobster love is that no prior knowledge of the character is required to enjoy his adventures, making this book equally appealing to the seasoned collector or novice.

Ancient Atlantis has never looked as monstrous as it does in *Undertow*. More Gillman than Aquaman, these denizens of the deep find themselves torn between their watery world and the promise of a surface inhabited by prehistoric man – if only they could breathe the air. A small group sets out to look for the Amphibian, a legendary beast that could hold the answer. *Undertow* promises to be a pulp monster adventure in the Har-

ryhausen vein but commits a few mistakes in its first chapter, not the least of which is burdening the reader with too much exposition. It's difficult to get a firm grasp on the Atlantean culture, or the different factions within that culture, when we're thrown right into the action – and it doesn't help that many of the characters look very similar. Still, the premise is promising and hopefully future issues will give the concept more, ahem, breathing room.



Lobster Johnson continues to be my favourite character in the Hellboyverse, primarily for how his stories perfectly blend horror and action into a refreshing modern take on old-fashioned pulp fiction. *Lobster Johnson: Satan Smells a Rat* collects Lobster's adventures from the last couple of years, complete with deadly Nazi gas weapons, desiccated corpses, resurrected Egyptian high priests and an army of killer monkeys. Each tale is fast-paced and beautifully illustrated, especially those of Joe Querio and

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NINTH CIRCLE

BOOKS

HIDDEN HORROR

Aaron Christensen, ed.

Kitley's Krypt

In this age of file-sharing, torrents and online accessibility, the concept of the "overlooked" film can be a nebulous one. It's hard to feel like an all-knowing cinematic gatekeeper amongst your friends when there's a "cult movies" section on Netflix and entire Doris Wishman films available on Youtube. Because of this, we should be exceedingly grateful for hardworking types such as Aaron Christensen, who has brought a new collection of essays written by a smart and passionate pack of journalists, thinkers and obsessives (including *Rue Morgue's* own Dave Alexander, Monica S. Kuebler and John W.

Bowen) on their favourite overlooked horror gems.

Hidden Horror covers an impressive variety of titles over its 101 essays: while the reader may recognize cult masterpieces such as *May*, *Tremors* and *Brain Damage*,

there are also lesser-known Hammer offerings (*The Curse of the Werewolf*), oft-neglected silent films (*The Man Who Laughs*), foreign treats (South Africa's *Dust Devil*) and a healthy dose of '80s trash 'n' slash, from *Razorbuck* to *Maniac*. And the essays themselves are truly intriguing. Cory Corlock's eloquent unpacking of 2002's all-but-forgotten Richard Gere vehicle *The Mothman Prophecies* is just as enticing as the chapter on Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* (described by author Anna McKibbin as a cross between *Faust* and *Phantom of the Opera*, featuring "a mediocre Sha-Na-Na rip-off band called the Juicy Fruits").

And then there are those pieces where the combination of film selection and personal passion make for compelling reading. In the first case, *HorrorHound* writer Jason Coffman heroically vouches for the aforementioned Wishman and her first "attempt" at a horror film, *A Night to Dismember*. He outlines the film's amateurish

flaws – and there are many – with a tone that can only be described as rapturous, and it's a delight to read his exhortations. The book's best essay, however, belongs to BJ Colangelo, who writes about a rape-revenge film – *I Spit On Your Grave* – from her perspective as a rape survivor. Her surprising and challenging ruminations on this notorious video nasty are unprecedented, making this not only an essential contribution to the study of horror films, but to a wider feminist discourse about notions of victimhood and violence.

ALISON LANG

IT CAME FROM 1957: A CRITICAL GUIDE TO THE YEAR'S SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND HORROR FILMS

Rob Craig
McFarland

Cult movie contrarian Rob Craig is at it again with another hyperbole-laden screed. The conceit behind his latest, *It Came from 1957: A Critical Guide to the Year's Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films*, is to assemble reviews of all 57 horror and science fiction films released in 1957 in the order they hit theatres. Why 1957? Well, Craig explains it was a time of nuclear fears, corporate culture and proto-feminist ideas (why that's different from 1955 or 1956 is unclear, except Craig likes movies from 1957 more). But it barely matters what the subject is; Craig is far more interested in indulging in alarming phrasing and crapping on accepted classics.

In an impassioned but exasperating first chapter, he rails against reckless nuclear experimentation and the stiflingly conservative atmosphere of the era, an approach which then spills over into his sub-textual examinations of the films. But it's soon obvious that Craig only lavishes over-the-top praise on movies that he feels challenge 1950s conformity while angrily dismissing everything else. There's definitely a case to be made that grade Z bottom-feeders

such as *Voodoo Island* or *Zombies of Mora Tau* are unsung classics, but simply insisting they're great because they fit your personal worldview doesn't cut it.

Craig's also taking some cues from contrarian music critic Armond White these days. Listing all his calculatedly controversial opinions is impossible, but here are a few gems: *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* series is "dreadful," character actor Dick Miller "singlehandedly sabotages" Roger Corman's films, uncredited AIP title designer Paul Julian is superior to Saul Bass, and *Alien* is "brain dead junk." My favourite? *The Curse of Frankenstein* has "laughable" creature design while the grasshoppers crawling on postcards in *The Beginning of the End* is "effective."

With its strange premise and insular opinions, *It Came from 1957* is the kind of book that is only really possible for the author to enjoy. Everyone else should stick with Bill Warren's definitive 1950s genre guide *Keep Watching the Skies*. Good film writing is about illuminating, not insisting.

PAUL CORUPE

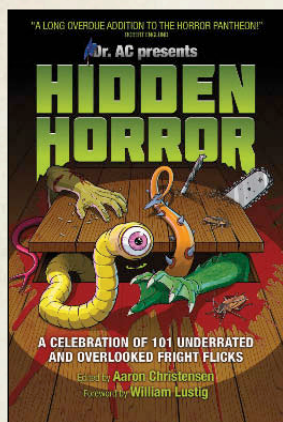
PSYCHO, THE BIRDS AND HALLOWEEN: THE INTIMACY OF TERROR IN THREE CLASSIC FILMS

Randy Rasmussen
McFarland

University librarian Randy Rasmussen chooses a strange assortment of films for this thematic analysis of the relationship between intimacy and terror. The book promises an in-

depth examination of the three classics by illustrating how the feminine protagonists are intimately linked with their tormentors. It is this intimacy, according to Rasmussen, that enhances the terror and offers audiences something more than your typical scare fare.

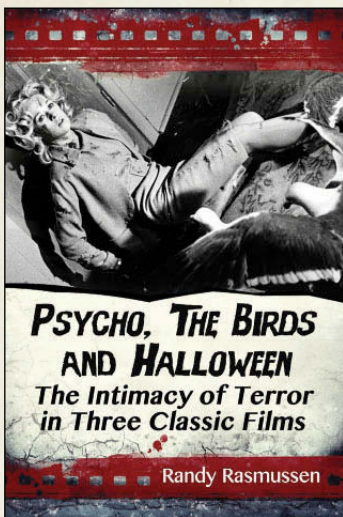
Divided into three chapters, each film gets a scene-by-scene treatment from its opening credits to end. The analysis of *Psycho* takes pains to point out that the world outside the Bates Motel is sympathetic and





The Birds

caring to Marion in stark contrast to the callous, indifferent manner in which she is disposed of by Norman. In his examination of *The Birds*, Rasmussen emphasizes the fact that, while the natural threat of the film remains unresolved, the surviving characters overcome the flaws that caused the initial conflict between them. The final chapter on *Halloween* looks at how the peace and normality of suburban Haddonfield is disrupted by Michael Myers' presence. The disruption of normality, the loss of innocence and the horror of the unknown – tell us something we don't know!



est in Rasmussen's textual analysis but, in the end, he selected three of the most talked-about films of the genre and fails to offer anything new.

THE ELECTRIC COMA DREAM

Matthew Gillies
Flinch Publications

We need a lifetime moratorium on all cutesy references to and "edgy" re-imaginings of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. After decades of name-checks, remakes and homages to Lewis Carroll's classic in print and on screen, it's beyond lazy to frame a novel around a morbid take on *Wonderland*. To quote George Harrison, "it's been done."

The Electric Coma Dream details the life and unconscious mind of a heroin addict named Anastasia, who is a graduate of the School of Hard Knocks. She attended class in a trite variation of the *Mean Girls* universe, was reluctantly adopted by a Furry mob boss and later became a drug dealer. Right from the get-go, the narrative tries too hard to shock. When a sexually aggressive jock crosses Anastasia's path, it's no surprise that he suffers violent sexual humiliation. Then, it's not crazy enough that Anastasia sells drugs. No, her supplier

THE GRIM READER



DARK DUETS

Christopher Golden, ed.
HarperCollins

Looking for a unique twist on the anthology format? Check out what editor Christopher Golden has cooked up for *Dark Duets*, a compilation of seventeen original short stories from author tag-teams who have never worked together before. Heavy-weight collaborators including Charlaine Harris and Rachel Caine, Tim Lebbon and Michael Marshall Smith, and Kasey Lansdale and Joe R. Lansdale offer imaginative, disturbing and genre-bending shorts (witness trolls, graphic self-mutilation and a human breeding facility, among other unholy offerings), proving that sometimes two heads are better than one.

JESSA SOBCZUK



THE VIOLET HOUR

Whitney A. Miller
Flux

Raised by an enigmatic religious cult (is there any other kind?), a teen girl is plagued by auditory and visual hallucinations urging her to kill. Whitney A. Miller's debut novel is a well-paced thriller with a few neat twists. Despite some clunky dialogue, *The Violet Hour* builds a nice sense of dread on its way to a surprisingly bleak ending.

ADAM CLARKE

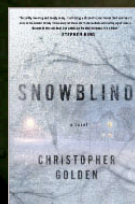


BLOOD KIN

Steve Rasnic Tem
Solaris

Award-winning author Steve Rasnic Tem (*Deadfall Hotel*) releases his most well-researched and intriguing novel to date with *Blood Kin*, a gripping Southern Gothic that explores the blood-stained past of a Virginian Melungeon family. Bouncing between the present-day perspective of Michael Gibson and his grandmother Sadie's childhood memories from the 1930s, psychic powers, witchcraft, snake-handling, dark family secrets and Appalachian imagery abound in this engrossing multi-generational tale.

JESSA SOBCZUK



SNOWBLIND

Christopher Golden
St. Martin's Press

This supernatural, ensemble cast epic, which spans a dozen years in the lives of its characters, is very reminiscent of classic Stephen King. Something hungry blows into the town of Coventry on the winds of a blizzard, which leaves a bevy of townsfolk frozen in its wake. Twelve years later, during a similar storm, the dead return in an attempt to save themselves and their loved ones. Eerie and emotional, this meticulously paced novel will make your blood run cold.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

WITH HIS **BURNT BLACK SUNS** SHORT STORY COLLECTION, SIMON STRANTZAS RESURRECTS THE WEIRD TALE

STAYING STRANGE

By MORRIS T. LAWRENCE

STEPHEN KING ONCE SAID A SHORT STORY IS LIKE A KISS IN THE DARK FROM A STRANGER. IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN PUCKER UP, BECAUSE WEIRD FICTION AUTHOR SIMON STRANTZAS HAS ELEVEN NEW YARNS THAT MIGHT LEAVE YOU BREATHLESS.

"I wanted to explore a type of horror story, namely the 'traditional weird,'" explains the British Fantasy Award-nominated author, whose work has been published in such revered tomes as *Postscripts*, *The Year's Best Dark Fantasy & Horror* and *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror*. "This certainly encompasses the work of Lovecraft, as it does other weird writers like [William Hope] Hodgson and [Robert W.] Chambers. My first collection, *Beneath the Surface*, has as its focus a more [Thomas] Ligottian outlook, and I've long felt that the book succeeded because of its cohesiveness and its willingness to attack that mode from different angles. I wanted to try something similar with this book, especially as my last two collections have skewed closer to the uncannily strange than outright weird. Although I certainly enjoy ambiguity in horror fiction, I wanted this book to focus more on revealing what lies beyond our imagined reality rather than hint at it."

Burnt Black Suns (out this spring from Hippocampus Press) contains something for every reader. Fans of Lovecraftian fiction will enjoy "On Ice," a yarn about a university expedition that gets lost in the snow on a remote arctic island, as well as "By Invisible Hands," the story of an aged puppet maker who wakes up with holes in his memory and blood and sawdust on hands. Elsewhere, Toronto native Strantzias mines his Canadian roots for "Dwelling on the Past," the story of a shady man hired to break up a group of Aboriginal protesters who ends up crossing something much more old and feral.

However, the book's strangest and most disturbing entry is its titular

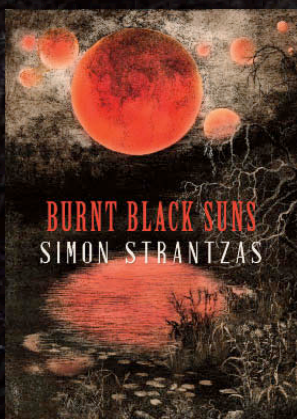
novella, "Burnt Black Suns," which features a man wandering Mexico with his pregnant girlfriend in search of his kidnapped son. The tense, despondent tale makes vivid use of language and imagery – including an ominous series of colourful and grotesque pinata effigies – dragging readers down into a devastating series of revelations concerning a cult and human sacrifice.

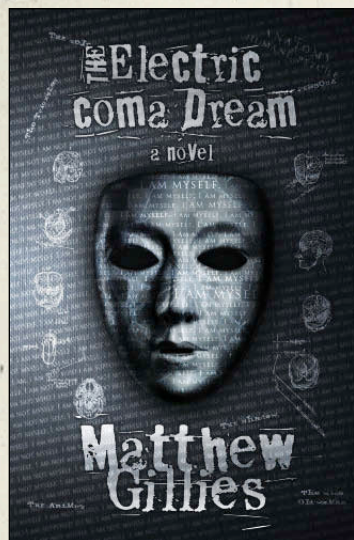
"[*Burnt Black Suns*] was a novella that I was sure would be the death of me," says Strantzias. "That novella changed so often I don't know where it came from, other than that the final horrific images came to me before anything else. I tried to visit different relationships in this book, and travel to different places. The stories vary, but at their heart they occupy the same narrative space. The horror genre is vast, but I wanted, with [this book], to investigate a small corner of it."

For readers more inclined toward the tragic and tasteful, "Beyond the Banks of the River Seine" delivers a story about a composer's desperate obsession with fame and the price he's willing to pay for it. (It's a delicious nod to Chambers' classic "The King in Yellow.") Another imaginative addition is "Thistle's Find," which concerns an unscrupulous hoarder who opens a gate to another dimension and keeps a resident from it captive.

When asked to pick a favourite, Strantzias becomes somewhat philosophical.

"In truth, I really do love all the tales in this collection, which is how I think it should be," he notes. "A collection should demonstrate a writer's power, and it does him or her no good to put out subpar material in an effort to pad the page count. This collection is my longest by far, but I don't think anyone will accuse me of padding. Each story and novella is an examination, and I hope the readers that come to it find themselves unable to leave it completely behind. My favourite story is thus the one that worms its way into the reader's psyche and takes up permanent residence there. I can think of no greater reward." 🍀





Coma Dream is the debut novel from Matthew Gillies. It's also the first novel from Flinch Publications, founded by Matthew Gillies, which explains how this book got past an editor. It's been reported that Carroll came to regret writing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Having suffered through *The Electric Coma Dream*, it's easy to share his pain.

ADAM CLARKE

GHOSTS OF PUNKTOWN

Jeffrey Thomas
Dark Regions

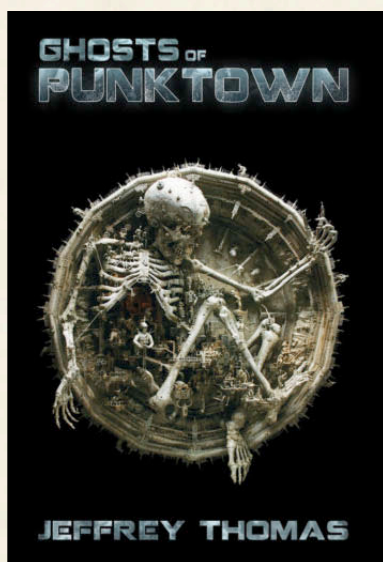
In the distant future on a far-off planet known as Oasis lies the settlement of Punktown. This sprawling metropolis has become notorious for its high crime rate, and the menagerie of cultures and races from every corner of the galaxy that call the city home. This is the colourful setting where the collection of stories featured in Jeffrey Thomas' *Ghosts of Punktown* takes place.

The tales cover a wide variety of subjects and situations, including guilt-ridden mutants returning from an inter-dimensional war ("In His Sights") and a new trend in plastic surgery where patients actually want to look ugly and horrific ("Disfigured"). There's very little that connects these tales apart from Punktown itself and the grim bleakness that seems to permeate every corner of the city. This ensures that things stay fresh and keeps the reader on edge as they wonder just where the next tale will take them.

There's more focus on the characters than the environments and this works to the book's advantage as it allows the readers to fill in the surroundings for themselves. It also helps make the people who inhabit these pages feel that much more real in a decidedly unreal setting. More rigid horror purists won't find much to their liking as the book's tone takes on a strongly dystopian science fiction flavour, despite instances of ancient homicidal monsters ("A Semblance of Life") and rogue machinery ("Relics"). Open-minded genre fans, however, will find something worthwhile in this sci-fi/horror mashup.

Thomas has written about Punktown on several other occasions and about 50 percent of the stories here are republished from other sources, meaning that fans of the world may stumble across something they've already read. That said, the originals are definitely some of the highlights, including the novella *Life Work*, about a hit man leaving his career and a rebel android that's just beginning hers. Whether this is your first visit to Punktown, or you're a long-time resident, you'll certainly find at least one corner of its twisted streets to call home.

MIKE BEARDSALL



All the buzz surrounding the upcoming television adaptation of *The Strain*, Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's vampirism-as-a-virus trilogy, which kicked off in 2009 with a best-selling book of the same name, has me reflecting on another incredibly original parasitic vampire story: Scott Westerfeld's *Peeps*.

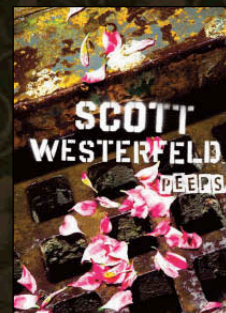
If you haven't heard of it, I'm not surprised. *Peeps* (out from Razorbill) is a young adult novel that hit bookstores in 2005, mere months before the first *Twilight* installment, and pretty much got lost in that book's roaring din. It's unfortunate, really, because if *Peeps* had become a huge hit instead of those sparkly vegetarian vampires, the teen bloodsucker boom of the last eight years would have likely looked a lot more horrific.

Peeps is the story of nineteen-year-old biology major Cal, a carrier of the vampire parasite. Being a carrier means he gets the benefits of improved strength, sight and smell without losing himself to the murderous urges of the parasite's less fortunate human hosts, but he's also perpetually horny. This is how vampirism spreads: it's a sexually transmitted disease, passed along via the exchange of saliva and bodily fluids. Cal works for the Night Watch, a centuries-old organization that hunts down the most feral and dangerous of the "parasite-positives" (nicknamed Peeps) and ships them away for treatment. This means Cal spends a lot of time in dark, subterranean places contending with hordes of rats that have become infected as a result of eating the Peeps' discarded scraps; rodents which will literally gnaw apart anyone that they see as a danger to the leader of their brood.

But just like real-life parasites, there is ultimately a purpose for vampirism's existence and evolution, and, without giving away any spoilers, I will say, therein lies much of the magic of this novel. It's not a supernatural horror story, but rather one scientifically rooted in cold, hard fact. This is driven home in each of *Peeps*' even-numbered chapters, which provide corollary lessons on actual parasites found in the animal kingdom and within our bodies (something fans of my monthly *Coroner's Report* column will certainly dig).

Vampires have long lived in the domain of supernatural, but as *Peeps*, its sequel *The Last Days*, and the aforementioned *Strain* trilogy have so amply proved, placing them within the vectors of our current knowledge of diseases and parasites not opens up a whole host (pun intended) of previously untapped narratives, but also many more rapidly spreading new frights. Get infected.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: THE ARTWORK IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

The art world recently paid tribute to the work of David Lynch with a March 8 exhibit at the Spoke Gallery in San Francisco, titled *In Dreams*, which included a fair share of *Twin Peaks*-themed pieces and featured some of today's biggest artists this side of the Red Room.

"We're always looking to put on interesting and compelling shows here at the gallery and realized that no one, as far as we know, had put on a show dedicated to the masterful works of Mr. Lynch," says gallery owner Ken Harman. "We handpicked the 40 or so artists we thought would work best aesthetically with Lynch's films."

Prolific print artist Joshua Budich's "The Owls Are Not What They Seem" – the title taken from a line in the series – perfectly captures the offbeat, nightmarish atmosphere of *Twin Peaks*. When it came time to decide what Lynch material to draw from, the show was an obvious choice.

"I chose to do a *Twin Peaks* piece because it paved the way for some of my other favourite shows: *X-Files*, *Fringe* and – dare I go so far as to say – *True Detective*?" he says. "Lynch's work makes it okay to be odd, inexplicable and uncomfortable. Which, deep down, even the most ardent critic of 'artsy-fartsy,' can find enjoyment in the challenge of watching."

Another artist who chose to focus on *Twin Peaks*, Jason D'Aquino (*RM#67*, *RM#100*), is known for his impossibly detailed miniature drawings on found objects and matchbooks. His piece, "Packard Saw Mill," depicts Laura Palmer, whose brutal murder is the catalyst for the plot of the show.

"Laura was the recently deceased homecoming queen whose murder is the central mystery at the heart of the series," he explains. "The 'mirror image' is actually Laura's evil doppelgänger, chilling at the Black Lodge. Since the arson fire at the Packard Mill is a scandalous conspiracy out of *Twin Peaks*, I thought the Old Mill matchbook was an appropriate canvas."

Out of curiosity, I asked each artist to tell me about their favourite moment from the show.

"I like when Leland Palmer kills Jacques and his hair turns white, and basically any time that Andy talks," says D'Aquino.

Budich quotes secondary character Jerry Horne's affection for a certain French food when he says, "I'll keep it simple and just say, 'baguette with brie and butter.'"

Visit spoke-art.com for info on this and other upcoming shows. To see more work from Budich, go to joshuabudich.com, and for D'Aquino, visit jasondaquino.com. 🦉





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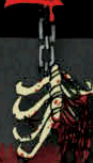
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THE GORE•MET

MENU: A THREE-COURSE PLATTER OF SERIAL KILLER SPLATTER



Get out your knives! Served up first on our serial-killer splatter platter is a reissue of Richard Terrasi's 2007 debut feature, *Am I Evil*, now in a director's cut rendered in tasty black and white, and featuring new scenes.

In the vein of grim indie serial-killer movies such as *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, viewers are dropped into the life of outwardly charming boy-next-door type Andrew (Mark Vazquez) for a ride-along while he hunts women in internet chat rooms and on the streets of New York. We follow him on a blind date as he takes a nice young lady out for dinner and then to a motel for sex, cannibalism, necrophilia and dismemberment. Andrew's appetite for murder and brutality becomes stronger with each kill – a chainsaw bisection here, a double amputation there – while hiding his secret life from his brother and girlfriend proves increasingly difficult. Throughout, he provides a running commentary of his crimes. "I don't have any intentions of ever doing anything positive for me or anyone else. I'm just like an animal waiting to get caught..."

The quality of the gore effects varies due to the film's budget (rendering it in grayscale was likely wise), but the final act delivers an ambitious face removal and some gnarly mutilated corpses. The score, with incidental music by Kristian Day and my former colleague Chris Alexander, ramps up the production value. The DVD, self-distributed by Terrasi through Dark Vision Films Distribution, is packed with extras, which include a making-of documentary and a commentary track.

Next, a truly rare delight. Even more uncommon than female serial killers are films about female serial killers, so Travis Campbell's blackly comic *Slaughter Daughter* is a fresh addition to the indie serial-killer canon. (However, technically, Farrah – played by Nicola Fiore – is a spree killer, as this film features one long orgy of violence instead of an extended series of premeditated murders.)

The plot: after being left at the altar, Farrah



Slaughter Daughter

spends two years in her bedroom losing her marbles and obsessing over the crimes and subsequent capture of a notorious local serial killer – news reports of his impending extradition send her into masturbatory frenzies. When her widowed, gold-digging mother announces she's marrying her father's best friend, the girl cuts off one of her pinkies and is committed to a mental hospital. Released for the impending nuptials, she visits Jackson Miles (Tim Dax) in prison to learn the art of serial killing (and seduce him the visitor's room!). When the wedding day finally arrives, Farrah is ready to get her psycho on.

There's a lot to like here – a delightfully surreal atmosphere, an excellent cast, a soundtrack with echoes of '70s gialli, and lots of blood once Farrah's tenuous grasp on sanity slips. The Brain Damage Films DVD also includes the original web series that inspired the film.

The *pièce de résistance* in this meal, however, is Jason Koch's *7th Day*, a "portrait" that excels at the conventions of the style. As in *Am I Evil*, the audience is thrown into the lap of Allen (Mark S. Sanders), a good-natured and self-reflexive serial killer. "If you ask most people to picture a killer, they would probably envision some kind of raving

lunatic. But the fact is I'm perfectly sane. Despite my hobby, I have a normal life. I'm stable, I'm well liked..."

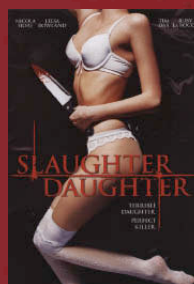
Allen's perception of his place in the world stands in stark contrast to the reality of his existence. He's an alcoholic crack addict in shit-stained underwear who washes dishes in a seedy bar when he's not murdering his "selections" or getting wasted with his pedophile neighbour. He fantasizes about giving up his campaign of killing and settling down to an idyllic life with

a waitress named Denise (Daisy Gibb), but she can barely disguise her contempt for him. Allen's delusions unravel during a seven-day descent into substance abuse and increasingly revolting crimes – his thoughts recorded by a silent, ever-

present reporter ripped straight out of the mind of David Cronenberg.

Sanders shines in this smart character study, which holds true to real serial killer psychopathy. While there's a succession of sick moments and flashes of gore in it – including some box-cutter carnage and a bathtub dismemberment that makes the one in *Henry* seem quaint – the grue in *7th Day*

seem quaint – the grue in *7th Day* (Dire Wit Films, available on Amazon) is not the focus of the film, making this entree a highly recommended one.



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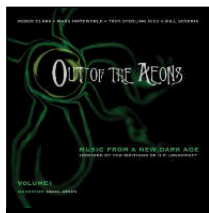
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REVIEWS BY MARK R. HASAN, KIEL HUME, AARON VON LUPTON,
SEAN PLUMMER, JEFF STEFFENS AND GLENN TILSON



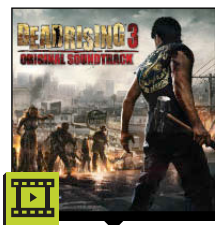
OUT OF THE AEONS: MUSIC FROM A NEW DARK AGE, VOL. 1

Reber Clark, Mars Homeworld,
Troy Sterling Nies, et. al.

INDEPENDENT

The words and impressions of twelve eerie H.P. Lovecraft tales are brought to life in this fairly low-key concept project written and performed by four composers that you've probably never heard of. Designed as a slow-burning, hour-long mood piece, each track begins with text read by a calm and slightly melodious Doug Jones (Abe Sapien from *Hellboy*), after which the composers unfurl their musical portraits, mostly rooted in traditional orchestral writing, with rare forays into rock and techno. Each effort has an appropriately snarling quality, and it's easy to pick out shades of Bernard Herrmann, Danny Elfman and even Tangerine Dream (à la the *Sorcerer* soundtrack). The shifting styles maintain continuity through mood, never overpowering the narration nor setting up cheap shock moments. This exceptionally well-produced outing proves to be an excellent showcase for a quartet of skilled composer/musicians. Available from outoftheaeons.com. **MRH**

1/2



DEAD RISING 3

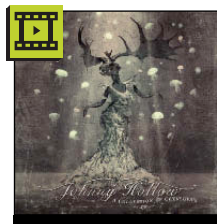
Various

SUMTHING ELSE MUSIC WORKS

Amid the throbbing bass and coarse guitar licks that dominate the score

cues on disc one of this double set, the spirit of former collaborators John Carpenter and Alan Howarth (original *Halloween* series, *Prince of Darkness*, *Christine*) varies from subtle to dominant, which is quite a feat given that the 23 cuts were scored by eight composers. Written to amp up scoping, skulking, combat and fast flight actions, the music features quick-rising intros, heavy chords, simple rhythmic hooks, voice samples and swirling synth figures. However, lacking any overt central themes and developments, the action tracks start to sound increasingly similar, weakening the intended impact of this otherwise well-produced set. Disc two's songs – spanning a mix of metal, Latin and punkish dance – offer a counterbalance. The set's aggressive (and beautifully engineered sound) is engaging, but its sexy fusion of metal, electronica and aggressive rhythms is ultimately undermined by a tangible monotony. **MRH**

1/2



JOHNNY HOLLOW

A Collection of Creatures

INDEPENDENT

It has been six years since Johnny Hollow gifted us with their last album, *Dirty Hands*. But the wait has been worth it, as the Canadian quartet returns with *A Collection of Creatures*, a sixteen-track release that deepens the band's relationship to goth, while continuing to forge its own identity as a purveyor of deeply creepy but melodic music. The group's take on The Sisters of Mercy classic "Temple of Love" slows down the original to amp its atmosphere, while singer/producer Janine White's seemingly innocent vocals contrast with the deep menace of tracks such as "A Little Bit Closer" and "The Body Lies." Cellist Kitty Thompson is arguably the band's musical centre, endowing these unique songs with a dynamic tension that has become the band's signature.

An inventive remake of Sinead O'Connor's "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" complements this mournful but sublime macabre music. **SP**



GOD MODULE

False Face

METROPOLIS RECORDS

Lurching right out of the gate with a bigger, more sinister sound than their last offering, 2005's *Viscera*, dark electronic act God Module aim to disturb, as well as get your body moving. Opener "A Good Night to Die" sets an appropriately evil mood, leading to standout tracks "Black and Blue" and "Destroy the Day." It's all violent foreplay building to the very New-Order-in-Hell vibe of closing cut "The Mark." Fans of Skinny Puppy's psychotic, unsettling brand of goth/industrial may find themselves in familiar territory; *False Face* manages to shock, creep and caress the listener with horrific sounds, icy atmospheres and abra-

sive vocals that mix surprisingly well with warm, catchy synth hooks and dancefloor beats. Though they've been around since 1999, it took *False Face* to show us the true visage of horror in God Module. **JS**



THE GODFATHERS

Once Upon a Crime

PSYCHO+LOGICAL RECORDS

There's a scene in crime film *Gangster No. 1* where the anti-hero dispatches his employer's rival in a far more gruelling fashion than the typical headshot or slit throat; he strips to his underwear before torturing, murdering and dismembering his victim for disposal – proof that you don't necessarily have to make a "horror" film to be horrifying. Likewise, *Once Upon a Crime* – Necro and Kool G. Rap's debut album as The Godfathers – may be a gangsta rap album, but it's packed with references to *The Omen*, Berkowitz, *Zodiac*, mutilation and necrophilia. Spit

GOth

BLUE SUNSHINE

Charles Gross

MONDO

Jeff Lieberman's cult oddity *Blue Sunshine* (1978), about a brand of LSD that turns users into psychotic killers, is the kind of film that could only have been released in the late '70s: a story reflecting the end of the '60s idealism, free love and experimental drugs. That said, this is no psychedelic album, though it is still a bit of an acid trip. Composed by Charles Gross, a relative unknown with considerable Hollywood experience, the *Blue Sunshine* score is based mostly around an eerie synth melody forming a stalker theme, with lots of gamelan percussion and xylophone thrown in. Then, randomly, it breaks into hot jazz numbers, show tunes and disco(!), while continuing to retain the same unique '70s vibe as the film. *Blue Sunshine*'s score was released for the first time on CD by Synapse in 2003 and now Mondo has seen fit to give it the deluxe treatment for its first appearance on vinyl. It features creative and beautiful artwork by Jay Shaw and is pressed on 180-gram vinyl, with random copies coming in blue. Trippy, dude. **AVL**

SOUNDTRACK



LISTEN to MY NIGHTMARE

Twin Peaks was a game-changer for television, and its reverberations continue to be felt throughout pop culture, especially in music. While the electronic and industrial genres often sample clips from the show, the 25-year-old series has also inspired other types of music, from Sinead O'Connor sampling it in a remix of "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" (1990), to Marilyn Manson's "Wrapped in Plastic" (1994), right up to modern indie rock band Surfer Blood's "Twin Peaks" (2010). But one of the best tributes to the series is "Black Lodge" on Anthrax's 1993 *Sound of White Noise* album. During the promotion of singer Scott Ian's spoken word tour this winter, I caught up with him to discuss both the song and *Twin Peaks* in general.

"There was nothing like it on TV at the time, and nothing like it came before," he recalls. "From the moment Pete Martell finds [Laura Palmer's] body and she's wrapped in plastic, everything about it was just so odd and off kilter. ... For the first sixteen episodes, it created a universe that has never been equalled"

"Black Lodge" is a reference to the mystical Black Lodge situated in the woods surrounding the fictional town of Twin Peaks, which serves as a sort of metaphor for Hell, opposite the more benevolent White Lodge.

"The song is actually about unrequited love," explains Ian, "though that love can take on different forms, whether it's Audrey Horne's love of causing mayhem or the love you have for a woman. The song is really a metaphor that has different meanings, which I think is in keeping with the show."

Amazingly, Anthrax was able to get *Twin Peaks* and long-time Lynch composer Angelo Badalamenti to help write the song.

"I remember Angelo Badalamenti coming into the studio where we were recording and putting the music he had written up all over the wall," Ian recalls. "He started explaining it but honestly it may as well have been in Greek because it meant nothing to me! [laughs] Still, it was a tremendous honour that he composed that song for us. His work is such a big part of what made *Twin Peaks* work, the sonic landscape he created."

Released two years after the show ended, *Sound of White Noise* was a major musical shift for Anthrax, introducing new vocalist John Bush and stripping away the band's trademark speed metal in favour of a darker, slower grunge influence. (The group also featured Frank Silva – who played murderous entity BOB

on the show – in their video for the song "Only.") Ultimately the album was as much a new chapter in Anthrax's sound as *Twin Peaks* was a dark new direction for television – something that Ian recalls in vivid detail.

"The first time you see killer BOB crouched down by the bed, I literally was, like, 'What the fuck did I just see?' I'm a lifelong horror fan but nothing scares me in movies, and the first time I saw BOB it scared the shit out of me."

AARON VON LUPTON

these rhymes atop the evil funky beats, which blend samples with studio instrumentation (as you'd expect from a Necro production), and you have a release that will satisfy the sickest horror-core aficionado. To paraphrase a chorus, they'll kill you and you'll enjoy it. **GT** ☠☠☠1/2



CANNABIS CORPSE/ GHOUL

Splatterhash Split

TANKCRIMES

What do you get when you combine toking death lords Cannabis Corpse with masked mystery thrashers Ghoul? The same thing you get when you combine anything with Cannabis Corpse: weed-themed hijinks! Unfortunately, the band's contribution to the *Splatterhash Split* is less than great. As usual, the song names are stellar ("The Inhalation Plague" and "Shatter Their Bong"), but in this case the schtick isn't enough to redeem them. The tracks are choppy and unpolished, as if they were thrown together in a jam session. Luckily, Ghoul saves the day with two skull-crushing thrash cuts. "Inner Sanctum" unleashes a torrent of badass guitar licks and horror imagery that could be a movie treatment in itself, while "Spill Your Guts" is fast, fun and filled with splatter. It might be an unbalanced release, but *Splatterhash* gets extra points for the excellent cover art, featuring both bands wielding bazooka bongos and riding through a scorched Earth on demons. **KH** ☠☠



OCCULT 45/DRONES FOR QUEENS

Split EP

HORROR PAIN GORE DEATH PRODUCTIONS
Occult 45 and Drones for Queens take turns offering up a meaty stew of

grindcore, crustpunk and D-beat influences. While all three subgenres have their merits, they do tend more towards the political than the horrific. But, lo and behold, the lyrics to Occult 45's "Entrails of a Beautiful Woman" are based on *Bijo No Harawata*, a 1986 Japanese film about a woman who is gang raped and murdered and then returns from the grave as a penis-headed demon! Elsewhere, "Priest Feast" reinterprets the church's sex-abuse scandal as a Satanic Mass. The remaining lyrics, including Drones for Queens' contributions, may land squarely in the "evils of everyday life" category, but if you don't mind a little social consciousness with your horror, and frantic drumming, incensed bellowing and churning guitar lines are your thing, you're in for a good time. **GT** ☠☠☠



MACABRE

Dahmer (LP reissue)

HELLS HEADBANGERS

Initially released in 2000, Macabre's *Dahmer* is an epic 26-song, multi-genre mass-murder metal opera entirely devoted to the life, murders and death of Jeffrey Dahmer. From his early days torturing pets in "Dog Guts," to playing surgeon with unwilling victims in "Drill Bit Lobotomy," it's all here. What makes the album particularly interesting is its use of so many different genres; Macabre play thrash, punk, death and grind, often mixing them in individual songs. The band also has a sense of humour about its subject, with GWAR-like carnivalesque touches on "In the Army Now" and "Jeffrey Dahmer and the Chocolate Factory." That said, the movement from serious serial killer tracks to humour-infused reworkings of American folk classics ("Coming to Chicago" is set to the tune of "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain") is ultimately exhausting. But, if this sounds like something you've been dying to revisit, the good people at Hells Headbangers have reissued it as both a special-issue image disc and a splatter-wax regular edition. Happy lobotomizing! **KH** ☠☠☠

HORROR PUNK ICONS *THE INDEPENDENTS* RETURN – MORE HAUNTED THAN EVER – WITH THEIR FIRST ALBUM IN SIX YEARS

TOUGH AS COFFIN NAILS

By **TOMB DRAGMIR**



JOEY RAMONE ONCE SANG, “ON MY LAST LEG, JUST GETTING BY. HALO ROUND MY HEAD, TOO TOUGH TO DIE.” HE COULD VERY WELL HAVE BEEN DESCRIBING THE INDEPENDENTS, ONE OF HIS FAVOURITE BANDS.

While we lost the punk icon in 2001, the South Carolina band he produced in the late '90s is still surviving, with a new album out this month.

“*Into the Light* is the scariest record we have ever put out” says The Independents frontman Evil Presley, but he isn’t referring to the monster-under-the-bed or the killer-in-the-closet kind of scary. “It really is the first time I have opened up for the world to see. It’s in-your-face, and definitely a more focused record as far as the song styles [go].”

Funded through a Kickstarter campaign supported in part by the band’s official fan club (affectionately called “The Legion of Doom”), the new album – the 22-year-old group’s first since 2008’s *Do It Again* – shines a biographical light on the real-life horrors the musicians have dealt with recently.

“Willy B [guitar, bass and co-founding member] and I have had a rough few years,” says Presley. “We lost a lot of people who were really close to us, including immediate family members.”

As a result, Presley took a year off from all of his vices before he started writing *Into the Light*. “No booze, etc. – no fun. I just wanted to focus on healing my wounds without holding shit in or killing myself slowly. We finally sat down and channelled our true feelings and emotions into these songs.”

The result is a collection of fourteen killer cuts that mix more personal, bittersweet sentiment into the ghoulish themes the group is known for. Standouts include the revved up punk song “Rise,” with its demon-faced angels laying waste to human flesh at the gates of Hell; the catchy toe-

tapper “Corpses in the Rain,” a sour sing-along about a broken-down woman’s concrete swan-dive, and “Black Angel,” which spins a poison-tipped tale of encroaching eternal darkness.

That said, surprisingly the overriding tone of the new tunes is optimism. Salvation through suffering and angels learning to fly on broken wings suggests a kind of foggy optimism uncommon in horror punk.

“Growing up, my mother had a picture hanging in my room of a guardian angel watching over two children crossing a broken-down bridge,” recalls Presley. “She loved angels and collected all kinds. When I see an angel, it reminds me of her. When I think of my loved ones that are gone, I think of them on the other side, waiting for me to join the party.”

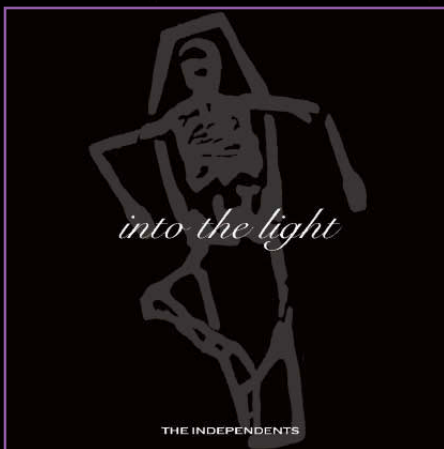
While personal demons, processing loss and ultimately redemption are the core of *Into the Light*, the band’s trademark humour creeps in on nihilistic punk cut “So Depressing” and the swinging Cramps-eque witchdoctor boogie of “Tsantsa Twist.”

“You gotta be able to laugh at life and all the shit we go through,” says Presley. “Let’s face it, if you’re rich or poor, a king or a tramp, you’re still going to end up dust. You’re better off if you just enjoy the ride. Everyone loves a good laugh in a horror movie, and then getting the shit scared out of them. There was nothing more fun as a kid than spending the night with a bunch of your friends [and a] bunch of scary VHS tapes, staying up all night drinking soda and

scaring the shit out of each other.”

Presley and Willy B promise there won’t be such a huge gap between albums next time. They’re currently doing some soundtrack work and have been offered their own Independents Music Festival in Las Vegas in October.

Says Evil, “We’re just going to stay busy, tour and enjoy life as much as we can, while we can!”



PLAY DEAD



NOW PLAYING > THE LAST OF US: LEFT BEHIND DLC, OUR DARKER PURPOSE, 99 LEVELS TO HELL.

THE LAST OF US: LEFT BEHIND

THE LAST OF US: LEFT BEHIND DLC

PS3
Naughty Dog

Not staying true to its title, last year's blockbuster PS3 exclusive *The Last of Us* has just expanded with another DLC. Unlike the previous multiplayer add-on, *Abandoned Territories* (see review in *RM#140*), *Left Behind* gets back to what put this game on our Best of 2013 list: the story.

It features two plotlines with young protagonist Ellie taking centre stage for both. One is set in the original game's post-apocalyptic timeframe, with Ellie racing to find first aid and medical treatment for her grievously injured guardian/friend, Joel, while avoiding bandits and zombie-like "Clickers." The other is a flashback, set during the early days of the outbreak, which highlights a crucial turning point in Ellie's life.

If you've played *The Last of Us* (and you should before playing this, as there are spoilers aplenty), you'll find no big changes to the game mechanics. Scavenging for supplies and fight-or-flight action still comprise the bulk of the gameplay. And as before, story is king: this installment is as emotionally wrenching as its bigger sibling. We get to see the events that turned Ellie from a relatively normal young girl into the now-hardened survivor. Central to this development is her relationship with her best friend, Riley, men-



tioned in passing in the original game. The flashback segments with Riley are threat-free, as the girls explore an abandoned mall. What this does, though, is allow you to "play out" their friendship, while also engaging in water-gun combat and goofing around in a Halloween shop. It provides a stark contrast to Ellie's present-day search for medical sup-

plies. Ultimately, it's a bold move by Naughty Dog, and shows their commitment to making narrative just as important as nuts-and-bolts gameplay.

There has been talk of a continuation of the series and if the quality of this DLC is any indication, there are still plenty of tales worth telling here. *Left Behind* is a worthy addition to one of gaming's smartest properties.

RON MCKENZIE



HEADSHOTS: EXCELLENT STORY, VOICE ACTING AND GRAPHICS.
MISFIRES: A QUICK PLAYTHROUGH AT THREE HOURS.

OUR DARKER PURPOSE

OUR DARKER PURPOSE

PC
Avidly Wild Games

Feeling up for a challenge? If so, try *Our Darker Purpose*, a top-down dungeon crawler with action-RPG elements. In it, you play Cordy, a young girl living in the Edgewood Home for Lost Children, where, one day, all of the adults suddenly vanish and the youngsters take over. Cordy must battle her way to the top floor of Edgewood to find the grown-ups and figure out the dark reason behind their disappearance.

Gameplay is simple enough: you navigate Cordy through the different rooms of each floor, battling the other students as well as a variety of monstrosities. Eventually you find the final boss of the floor and, after defeating it, you unlock the next section of Edgewood to explore. As you progress and level up, you're able to pick between various perks that give Cordy increased stats and abilities. You will also come across a variety of beneficial items (such as Zelo's Spectacles that increase the range of your attacks), which can be found or purchased from vending machines in the game.

Just don't expect to reach the top floor quickly. *Our Darker Pur-*



pose is punishingly difficult; enemies are abundant and health potions are few, and once you die you have to start all over again from the very beginning with none of the items you've acquired up to that point. This aspect makes the game frustrating at first, but the more you play the better you become and soon that frustration turns into addiction as you struggle to get further and further.

While the end bosses are always the same, the layout of each floor is randomized and changes with every reload, so you never feel like you're playing the same thing over and over again.

The game requires a lot of quick action and reaction, and the occasional cheap death can occur. However, with its Tim Burton-esque art, morbid sense of humour and simple yet challenging gameplay, *Our Darker Purpose's* Home is certainly worth checking into.

MIKE BEARDSALL



HEADSHOTS: ADDICTIVE GAMEPLAY, CREEPY ATMOSPHERE, CHALLENGING.
MISFIRES: MIGHT BE TOO HARD FOR SOME, BOSSES CAN GET BORING AFTER MULTIPLE PLAYTHROUGHS.



99 LEVELS TO HELL

PC
Zaxis Games



Borrowing elements from retro gaming is a popular trend in indie titles. Many games, such as the puzzle/platformer *Fez* and the crafting/platformer/RPG *Starbound*, have channelled old-school gameplay, only to improve upon it to create new gaming experiences. The rogue-like, platform-shooter *99 Levels to Hell* jumps on this nostalgia train with enjoyable results – yet stumbles into some classic pitfalls.

As The Magician, a short, top-hat-clad man with a Dali moustache (in other words, a steampunk Mario), you venture through 99 levels of the underworld to reach Hell, kill Satan and save your brother. Most levels are simple 2-D mazes that hide the key needed to advance. They are randomly generated and every set of ten levels has its own theme (among them, a futuristic one with robots and a fleshy one with flying crustaceans). Of course, there are tons of monsters to shoot through in every stage and they die in a satisfying mess of cartoon gore. Plus, every tenth level you face a boss that you must sink copious amounts of ammo into, while fending off other creatures.

Initially armed with an ineffectual shotgun and five units of health, the game's perma-death and unforgiving enemies (such as a bat that multiplies into several smaller bats when shot) hearkens back to the difficulty of old-school titles such as *Gauntlet* and *Contra*.



Luckily, after you defeat each set of ten levels, the door to the next set is unlocked in every new game you start.

Despite each level being randomly generated and littered with weapons, power-ups, gold, unlockable characters, etc., many of the segments are repeated throughout numerous

levels. When coupled with extensive running, jumping and shooting, things can get monotonous.

If you have some time to kill, an itchy trigger finger, and an urge frantically murder monsters, this is one hell of a game, but if you're looking for something to hold your attention longer than half an hour, I would avoid plummeting down these 99 levels.

PATRICK DOLAN



HEADSHOTS: FUN GAMEPLAY, CHALLENGING ENEMIES, LOTS OF CARTOON BLOOD.

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CLASSIC CUT

THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE: "GRAMMA"

DIRECTED BY BRADFORD MAY ☠ USA - 1986

After more than twenty years of repeats in syndication and a major Hollywood movie, *The Twilight Zone* was revived in 1985 by CBS under the stewardship of executive producer Philip DeGuere. Although this anthology series boasted several memorable episodes – helmed by the likes of William Friedkin, Wes Craven and Joe Dante – perhaps its most frightening offering was “Gramma,” scripted by the show’s creative consultant, Harlan Ellison, and directed by cinematographer Bradford May.

Adapted from the short story by Stephen King (which first appeared in the 1984 issue of *Weirdbook* #19 and was later collected in *Skeleton Crew*), “Gramma” centres around eleven-year-old Georgie (Barret Oliver) who is left home alone one stormy night with his terrifying grandmother (Frederick Long). Bedridden by obesity and dementia, Gramma is deteriorating in a shuttered room at the end of the hall, from which her gurgling cries for tea drift out intermittently. Georgie duly makes his gram a brew and upon warily entering the shadowy chamber is startled by her grasping hand. Dropping the tea on the floor, he flees. Returning to clean up the mess, he inadvertently discovers a secret portal located beneath a false floorboard, which contains some of Gramma’s old books (as well as a possible entrance to Hell). Perusing the tomes, Georgie learns that the ailing matriarch is in fact a witch who may be intent on possessing his youthful body.

“Gramma” was inspired by a real-life incident that happened to King as a child after his invalid grandmother came to stay at the family home in Durham, Maine – one day, when he was alone with the woman, she died. Ellison, who had earlier expressed misgivings to his production team about the story’s prospects as a workable teleplay, delivers an outstanding script that deftly captures the feelings of intense squeamishness some children have of old people – particularly elderly relatives who insist on hugs and kisses.

Friedkin was originally assigned to direct “Gramma” as his second episode (following the impressive “Nightcrawlers”), but dropped out two days before production commenced for personal reasons. May, who had lensed many of *Zone*’s best segments, was quickly drafted in by DeGuere and sought to reward his producer’s faith by utilizing the recently developed remote controlled camera rig known as a “Hot-Head.” This equipment allowed him to keep the camera constantly mobile in the cramped set and execute a startling array of complex shots that were extremely ambitious for low-budget television.

The gloomy visuals assist in sustaining a dread-filled tone (despite the abundant use of voice-over to impart Georgie’s interior thoughts and memories), and May cleverly keeps the grotesque figure of Gramma hidden away until the end of the episode. Each time Georgie ventures into her room we see only an enormous lump swathed in bedclothes from under which a puffy,

wrinkled hand with ragged nails sometimes emerges. Finally, on the one occasion Georgie gets too close to Gramma’s bed, she seizes him with a meaty claw and we get our first glimpse of her hideous visage – courtesy of makeup artist James Cummins (*The Thing*).

Another commendable aspect of this episode is the unnerving panoply of sound effects devised by the tireless Ellison (who also co-directed without credit and furnished the voice of Georgie’s uncle).

Gramma’s raspy tones are provided by three-time Oscar nominee Piper Laurie (*Carrie*), aided by guttural shrieks and pleas from Ellison as the dying woman invokes the cosmic entities of Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth from Lovecraft’s *Necronomicon*.

King later reused elements from “Gramma” in his 1993 novel *Dolores Claiborne*, but this chilling episode would also anticipate the ominous octogenarians of *Rabid Grannies* (1988), which – despite the misleading title – features Belgian spinsters possessed by the black arts. It would further inspire *Grandmother’s House* (1989), the story of two siblings who discover a dreadful secret about their creepy grandparents; *The Granny* (1995) which concerns a dying grandmother who drinks an eternal youth potion and is transformed into a demon that terrorizes her scheming relatives; and the first segment in Hélène Cattet and Bruno Forzani’s stunning neo-giallo *Amer* (2009), in which a young girl is terrorized by her shrouded grandmother. In 2014, Universal Pictures will release Peter Cornwell’s *Mercy*, a feature film that expands King’s original 26-page story and stars Chandler Riggs as Georgie.

Shortly after “Gramma” was completed, Ellison resigned as creative consultant on *The New Twilight Zone* due to a well-publicized dispute with the network’s standards and practices. Overall, the second incarnation of Rod Serling’s classic series lacked the cohesive vision of the original. It was cancelled in 1988 after three seasons, having never earned the critical praise heaped on its much-loved predecessor. Despite this, “Gramma” remains a pertinent example of Ellison’s creative genius and a high watermark for small-screen horror.

MICHAEL DOYLE



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